

**Family and Community Factors Encouraging Study
Persistence among Tasmanian Rural High School Students:
An Exploration of Social Capital**

Hazel Joyce Baynes

B.A., Dip. Ed.

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Tasmania

April 2009

Statement of originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis.

H. J. Baynes

Hazel Joyce Baynes

Statement of authority of access

This thesis may be made available for loan and limited copying in accordance with the *Copyright Act 1968*.

H J. Baynes

Hazel Joyce Baynes

Abstract

This thesis investigates family and community factors encouraging Tasmanian rural high school students to continue with post-compulsory (or post-Year 10) education and training at urban senior secondary colleges. The research is based on a purposive and positive sample of 24 students who had successfully completed Year 11 studies and intended completing Year 12 then proceeding to post-Year 12 education and training. They had previously attended rural high schools that had a) a good record of retention to Year 11 in urban senior secondary colleges, b) student achievement levels comparable to urban schools and c) good community links.

Students' experiences of the initial three years of post-compulsory education and training were explored in interviews conducted in 2003 during Year 12, and approximately one year later. A further perspective on students' experiences was drawn from 55 interviews conducted later in 2003 with people students nominated as important in encouraging them. Thematic analysis revealed three student participation profiles – a straightforward and successful experience, a problematic but successful experience and a limited experience.

The concept of social capital provided a means of accounting for and integrating the range of family and community factors that influenced development and realisation of the students' post-compulsory education and training aspirations. It was useful in understanding students' post-compulsory education and training careers, particularly in terms of their awareness of, willingness to use, and use of available family and community resources and in explaining the benefits of students' personal networks. The concept was most useful in understanding development of post-compulsory education and training aspirations of students expected to participate at that level, of students exposed to family regret over non-participation, and the realisation or non-realisation of students' aspirations. The concept was less helpful in understanding the post-compulsory education and training careers of a minority of the students who were highly intrinsically-motivated and self-reliant, had been less influenced by family and community when developing and realising their aspirations, and had grown up in families where post-compulsory education and training was not valued above other activities in which students may engage after completing school.

The significance of the research lies in its investigation of continuing rural under-representation in post-compulsory education and training from the student perspective. The thesis explores the application of different concepts of social capital found in the literature. Using a social constructivist approach, and ethnographic and phenomenological methods, several indicators of social capital in rural students' family and community networks are examined to assess their usefulness in understanding rural students' post-compulsory education and training careers.

Acknowledgements

Many people played a role in enabling this research to be completed. First and foremost my thanks go to all the participants in the research for their interest and generosity in setting aside time for involvement. The willingness of student participants' to discuss their experiences openly and frankly and the valuable insights of non-student participants were much appreciated. I am also grateful to all the staff in the rural schools, the senior secondary colleges, the Department of Education and the Tasmanian Institute of TAFE who assisted with locating potential participants and facilitating data collection.

Heartfelt thanks go to my supervisors. I have benefited from Dr. Sue Kilpatrick's guidance, her contribution of theoretical wisdom and practical expertise, and her enthusiasm for research. Her contribution was all the more notable and generous given her many commitments and busy schedule. I am indebted to Dr. Joan Abbott-Chapman for providing the impetus for beginning the research, for sharing her vast research knowledge and experience and for her guidance at crucial stages. The extent of her educational research experience, demonstrated in an ability to empathise and encourage, was especially appreciated.

I am grateful to fellow research higher degree students and faculty colleagues for their interest in the research topic. Informal discussions with them were beneficial for the research and contributed to the thesis being completed.

Finally a special thank you goes to my family for their interest in and continuing encouragement of the research and their good-humoured patience during the entire process.

Table of contents

	Page No.
Statement of originality	ii
Statement of authority of access	iii
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of contents	vii
List of Tables	xiii
List of Figures	xiv
List of Acronyms	xv
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Introduction to the research problem	1
Background to the research	1
Rural post-compulsory participation: the current situation	3
Rurality	7
Research questions to be addressed	9
Research orientation	10
Limitations of the research	12
Significance of the research	13
Structure of the thesis	14
Chapter 2 Tasmanian context and patterns of post-compulsory education and training participation	16
Introduction	16
Profile of the five communities from which participants are drawn	18
Key statistics for the five communities	19
Education and training background	19
Family economic circumstances	20
Socio-economic background	21
Youth unemployment	21
Brief history of rural post-compulsory education and training participation in Australia	22
Patterns of post-compulsory education and training participation in Australia	24
	vii

	Tasmanian post-compulsory education and training participation	25
	Summary	30
Chapter 3	Literature Review	31
	Introduction: Critical changes in post-compulsory education and training participation since the 1980s	31
	Main emphases in subsequent research	33
	Rural students' participation in post-compulsory education and training	35
	Influences on post-compulsory education and training participation linked to rurality	40
	Family factors influencing overall post-compulsory education and training participation	44
	School and community factors influencing overall post-compulsory education and training participation	46
	Impact of social support networks on overall student attitudes toward and participation in post-compulsory education and training	49
	Social support in rural communities	51
	The contribution of the concept of social capital to understanding of rural students' post-compulsory education and training participation	54
	What is social capital?	54
	Conceptual elements of social capital	56
	Social capital and educational participation and achievement	60
	Social capital in rural research	63
	Social capital in this thesis	64
	Summary	67
Chapter 4	Methodology	69
	Introduction	69
	Research approach	69
	Theoretical perspective and philosophical assumptions	75

Strategy of inquiry and methodology	76
Role of the researcher	78
Ethical issues	82
Gaining access to the research sites and participants	84
Access to Tasmanian Department of Education sites and participants	85
Access to TAFE sites and participants	87
Access to those that encouraged the students	88
Data collection	89
Sampling	89
Interviews	94
Phase 1 interviews	94
Phase 2 interviews	95
Phase 3 interviews	95
Focus groups	97
Data recording procedures	97
Data analysis	98
Verifying the research findings	102
Summary	104
 Chapter 5	
Summary findings on types of rural student experience of post-compulsory education and training	105
Introduction: Three types of experience	105
A straightforward and successful experience	105
A problematic but ultimately successful experience	108
A limited experience	111
Summary of underlying issues for students	115
Reconciling demands competing with realisation of post- compulsory education and training and career aspirations	117
Strength of commitment to post-compulsory education and training aspirations and strength of career attachment	117
Strength of family expectations and values regarding post-compulsory education and training	121

Strength of attachment to family, peers, community and rural locality	126
Counter attraction of local employment and financial independence	139
Summary	148
Chapter 6 Theoretical and conceptual analysis of students’ social capital	151
Introduction	151
Social capital resources	155
Family and community perceptions of resources available in students’ networks	156
Students’ awareness of resources available in their networks	158
Students’ willingness to use resources available in their networks	162
Extent of networks utilised by students	164
Students’ relationships to family and community networks	165
Bonding, bridging and linking social capital	165
Strong ties and weak ties	166
Students’ family relationships	168
Students’ community relationships	169
Multiplex relationships	172
Effect of students’ family and community relationships on their post-compulsory education and training aspirations and participation	175
Norms and values – consonant or dissonant?	177
Students’ values and aspirations	178
Students’ perceptions of family norms and values regarding post-compulsory education and training	179
Family norms and values regarding post-compulsory education and training and their expectations of students	180
Community norms and values regarding post- compulsory education and training	183

Effect of family and community norms on students' post-compulsory education and training participation	184
Trust and students' use of resources available	186
Types of trust – personal, social and institutional trust	187
Development of students' social and institutional trust	188
Trust of family, community and institutional resources	190
Trust and family resources	190
Trust and community resources	191
Trust and school, college and education system resources	193
Effect of students' trust on use of resources	194
Summary	196
Chapter 7 Conclusion and discussion	198
Introduction: Review of the research problem	198
Research questions	202
Summary findings and conclusions	203
Research Question 1: What role does social capital, particularly that available to students through family and community networks, play in shaping students' post-compulsory education and training aspirations?	203
Research Question 2: What role does social capital, particularly that available to students through family and community networks, play in encouraging or discouraging students' realisation of their post-compulsory education and training aspirations?	211
Research Question 3: How useful is the concept of social capital in understanding rural students' post-compulsory education and training careers?	218
Limitations of the research	224
Conclusions	224
Recommendations for action	226
Suggestions for further research	230
References	231

Appendix A: Student PCET participation profiles	i
Appendix B: Notification of University of Tasmania Ethics Approval	ii
Appendix C: Notification of Department of Education, Tasmania permission to conduct research in schools	iii
Appendix D: Notification of permission to conduct research involving TAFE students	iv
Appendix E: Student information letter	v
Appendix F: Parent information letter	vi
Appendix G: ‘Encouraging other’ information letter	vii
Appendix H: Student focus group information letter	viii
Appendix I: ‘Encouraging other’ focus group information letter	ix
Appendix J: Student interview consent form	x
Appendix K: Parent of student interview consent form	xi
Appendix L: ‘Encouraging other’ interview consent form	xii
Appendix M: Student focus group consent form	xiii
Appendix N: ‘Encouraging other’ focus group consent form	xiv
Appendix O: List of Issues, Preliminary Interview Survey	xv
Appendix P: List of Issues, Phase 1 interview	xvi
Appendix Q: List of Issues, Phase 2 interview	xxi
Appendix R: List of Issues, Phase 3 interview	xxiii
Appendix S: Summary of findings, Students	xxvii
Appendix T: Summary of findings, ‘Encouraging others’	xxix
Appendix U: List of issues to discuss in focus groups	xxxi
Appendix V: Coding frame and examples of coding	xxxii

List of Tables

	Page No.
Table 2.1: ARIA & ASGC classification of areas around the five towns	18
Table 4.1: Research sequence: Steps in planning and conducting the research	82
Table 4.2: Data collection steps	92
Table 4.3: Steps in the data analysis process	101

List of Figures

		Page No.
Figure 2.1	Australian school participation rates for 15-19 year olds, 1991-2000	26
Figure 2.2:	Australian VET participation rates for 15-19 year olds, 1998-2000	27

List of Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEC	Australian Education Council
ANOP	Australian National Opinion Polls
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ARIA	Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographic Classification
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DEET	Department of Education, Employment and Training
DET	Department of Education, Tasmania
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
HEC	Higher Education Council
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
ICASC	Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission
LSAY	Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
NBEET	National Board of Employment, Education and Training
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCET	post-compulsory education and training
RRMA	Remote, Rural and Metropolitan Areas Classification
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Index for Areas
TAFE	technical and further education
VET	vocational education and training

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the research problem

Rural students are less likely to participate in post-compulsory education and training (PCET) than their urban counterparts. Despite 30 years of research-instigated change and reform, in the education system and in schools, to overcome discrepancies between urban and rural participation rates, a gap still remains. Previous research has centred on identifying the barriers to participation and putting forward strategies that have removed or alleviated barriers. This research takes a different approach focusing on the student perspective and the positive aspects of the experiences of a sample of Tasmanian rural students who have chosen to continue with their education beyond the compulsory years. It follows up the suggestion from findings of earlier research that family factors have an influence on educational participation and examines factors that are associated with students' homes and families and the role these factors play in encouraging rural students to persist with PCET. However, the research extends the investigation beyond the family and into the community by utilising the concept of social capital and examining also the influence and impact of others living in the rural area on the students' PCET aspirations and achievements.

Background to the research

The educational participation of rural students has been a continuing issue of concern at both national and state levels since the 1970s. The Karmel Report "*Schools in Australia*" detailed the facts of educational disadvantage in rural Australia in terms of length of schooling, participation in higher education and below average achievement (Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission [ICASC], 1973).

A variety of terms are used in the literature to refer to education and training undertaken after completing the compulsory years of schooling. In this thesis the term PCET is used to describe all forms of such education and training. This includes all education and training described as senior secondary (school) education, upper secondary (school) education, post-school education, post-secondary (school) education, higher education, university education, tertiary education, vocational education and training, and technical and further education.

At the time this research was conducted the vast majority of Tasmanian students continuing with PCET were proceeding to Year 11 and 12 studies at a senior secondary college. Although there is some scope for students to continue directly to vocational education and training (VET) at a technical and further education (TAFE) institution or via an apprenticeship or traineeship with a registered training organisation, entry to many of these courses requires students to have completed at least Year 11 and often Year 12, thus limiting the number of students taking this direct path. In 2002 only 7% of male students and 4% of female students in the 2001 Year 10 cohort continued to TAFE (DET, 2004a, p.24). This situation is in contrast with many other parts of the world where there is greater scope for direct school-to-TAFE or further education transition.

In more recent literature on overall (i.e. not only rural) PCET participation in Australia, issues that are central to understanding the patterns of participation and the influences on participation have been thoroughly dissected and discussed (e.g. Marks, Fleming, Long & McMillan, 2000; Lamb, Dwyer & Wyn, 2000; Roussel & Murphy, 2000; Roussel, 2002; McMillan & Marks, 2003; Fullerton, Walker, Ainley & Hillman, 2003; Lamb, Walstab, Teese, Vickers & Rumberger, 2004). The benefits of staying on at school and completing Year 12 have been well documented (e.g. Ainley, Malley & Lamb, 1997; Cullen, 1998) and the disadvantages of not doing so have been highlighted (e.g. Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development [OECD], 1997; McKenzie, 2000).

Many studies have sought to investigate young people's attitudes towards and aspirations for PCET (e.g. Australian National Opinion Polls [ANOP], 1993, 1994; Hannan, Ferguson, Pollock & Reeders, 1995; National Board of Employment, Education & Training [NBEET], 1995; James, 2000, 2002; Beavis, Murphy, Bryce & Corrigan, 2004). Others have examined the influences on young people's choices for their post-compulsory years (e.g. Pascoe, 1996; James, Wyn, Baldwin, Hepworth, McInnis & Stephanou, 1999; Harvey-Beavis & Robinson, 2000). Some researchers have concentrated on the individual level and studied the social-cognitive factors that influence the goals that students select and the vigour with which they pursue them (e.g. Dweck, 1996) and some have investigated family influence on educational participation (e.g. Abbott-Chapman, Easthope & O'Connor, 1997; Gorard, Rees & Fevre, 1999; Marks, et al., 2000).

Living in and attending school in a rural area is widely recognised as one of several factors that negatively influence PCET participation (e.g. Department of Employment, Education & Training [DEET], 1990; Australian Education Council [AEC], 1991; Higher Education Council [HEC], 1996). Some research has therefore focused on rural students in particular and investigated the difficulties they faced when trying to continue their education or training past the compulsory years (e.g. Darnell & Simpson, 1981; Parker, Cooney, Bornholt, Harman, Ball & Scott, 1993; Western, McMillan & Durrington, 1998; James, et al., 1999; Abbott-Chapman & Kilpatrick, 2001; Kilpatrick and Abbott-Chapman, 2002; Alston & Kent, 2003; Hillman, 2005; Stokes, Stacey & Lake, 2006).

Tasmanian students, both urban and rural, have not always been included in research, perhaps because they form a small proportion of total student numbers. However locally-based research has examined the situation of rural students in the state in terms of equity of access to PCET (e.g. Behrens, O'Grady, Hodgson, Hoult & Hughes, 1978; Braithwaite, 1987; Abbott-Chapman, Hughes & Wyld, 1991, 1992; Choate, Cunningham, Abbott-Chapman & Hughes, 1992; Cunningham, Choate, Abbott-Chapman & Hughes, 1992; Kilpatrick, Williamson, Thrush, 1999; Kilpatrick, Abbott-Chapman & Baynes, 2002).

Rural post-compulsory education and training participation: the current situation

Across the nation increases in rural PCET participation rates have been achieved as a result of research. There have been improvements to the situation of rural students following research attention to factors that assist rural young people in overcoming disadvantage especially in the education system (e.g. Withers & Batten, 1988; Batten, Withers, Thomas & McCurry, 1991; Patterson & Abbott-Chapman, 1992). Reforms to curricula, assessment and teaching have been linked with the most rapid rise in school retention (Ainley, et al., 1997).

However, many rural students are still not completing school (i.e. Year 12) and have also been shown to be an increasing proportion of the total number of students who were not completing (Lamb, et al., 2000, p.1). A further concern is the apparent stalling of progress in improving rural participation rates. Since the early 1990s urban/rural differences in Year 12 participation have remained relatively unchanged

(Fullerton, et al., 2003, p.22) and non-metropolitan university participation rates have been found to be approximately 10% lower than metropolitan rates (Marks, et al., 2000; Stevenson, Evans, Maclachlan, Karmel & Blakers, 2001; Fullerton, et al., 2003). Being from a non-metropolitan location still has a negative influence on PCET intentions and participation (Khoo & Ainley, 2005).

Further research is needed for several reasons. Firstly, the rural population continues to be under-represented in PCET, a concern for everyone with an interest in the future development of the intellectual assets of all Australians, regardless of where they live.

Secondly, the need to more fully understand why rural students are less likely to continue with PCET remains because the degree of rurality of a region is still impacting on students' PCET aspirations and consequently on participation. The fact that this impact continues despite the existence of regional vocational education and training (VET) institutions, the development of a network of regional universities and the policy responses and interventions of several Australian governments adds impetus to the search for understanding.

A third issue is that government policy continues to be one of broadening participation. The *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century* states that schooling should be socially just so that "all students have access to the high quality education necessary to enable the completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent, and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training" (Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training & Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 1999). High levels of PCET participation are associated generally with a promising future for an individual and also with national economic development. At the individual level such participation is necessary for the development of the skills required to participate in the labour market. Nationally a knowledgeable and skilled workforce is considered necessary for economic and social wellbeing and for Australia's ability to compete in the global economy and contribute to world affairs. Australia has recently been shown to compare unfavourably with other OECD countries in terms of the proportion of 25-34 year olds with an upper secondary education or higher; with only 75% of young people in this category Australia ranks 20th out of 30

countries (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2005). Therefore research is still needed to pinpoint the best strategies to achieve higher levels of PCET participation.

Some commentators have noted that school retention overall (not only rural) is in decline. "Australia is one of the few countries in the OECD where school retention declined during the 1990s" (Spierings, 2001, p.22). Others have observed that a national policy approach to the learning and work needs of Australian youth has slipped as a central focus in Canberra and that government spending on youth transitions will reduce by just over \$4 million in the next four years (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2003, p.3). Students from rural areas are among the many from disadvantaged backgrounds continuing to face financial disincentives to continue with PCET.

Several issues that are peculiar to Tasmania are also relevant. The population is more rurally dispersed than other States; a bigger proportion of the population lives outside the capital city and major urban centres (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2005a). The majority of PCET provision is in the major cities, although the situation is changing with some senior secondary and VET provision in regional centres. This situation impacts considerably on participation rates. Tasmanian rural PCET participation rates have been consistently lower than those in most other States (ABS, 1994-2001; Kilpatrick, et al., 2002), although there has been some improvement since 1996 (ABS, 2008).

At the education system level there is a pressing need to understand the educational issues that are peculiar to rural areas because so many beginning teachers in Tasmania now start their career in rural schools. Of the 145 graduate recruit teachers employed in Department of Education schools in Term 1 2005, a total of 70 went to schools in the North-West branch, mostly those (rural schools) on the west coast and in the Circular Head area (Evans, personal communication, 24th May 2005). Similarly, graduate recruit teachers were a high proportion of beginning teachers in the rural schools in the North branch (Plowright, personal communication, 23rd May 2005). Some of those appointed to schools in the South branch would also be going to rural schools.

The importance of and necessity for higher levels of education and training participation for Tasmania's future and the consequences of allowing Tasmania's skill base to decline could be significant to future economic development (Department of Education Tasmania [DET], 1999). "International comparisons suggest that the current low level of Tasmanian participation could lead to a widening gap in competitiveness and hence wellbeing between Tasmania, other Australian states and the rest of the industrialised global economy" (Baynes, Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman 2002, p.5). Eslake (2002) asserts that Tasmania's economy has performed poorly for a long time and he claims that a big part of the problem has been the low level and slow growth of productivity. This poor productivity, in turn, is a result of a low level of growth in physical capital and a relatively low level of investment in human capital. Eslake believes the low participation rate of Tasmanians in PCET is a contributor to the higher unemployment rate and he lists one of the requirements for strong productivity as an educated, skilled and motivated workforce. He calls for Tasmania and Tasmanians to be more conscious of the value of education.

Several other issues identified in previous research as worthy of further attention have been central to the development of this research study. The need to encourage students from low socio-economic backgrounds to complete school has been noted (Marks et al., 2000; Kettley, 2007; Thompson, 2008) and a call has been made for further research to develop the most appropriate long term strategies to ensure equal representation of the geographically-isolated, socio-economically-disadvantaged and rural groups in higher education (Postle, Clarke, Skuja, Bull, Batorowicz & McCann, 1997, p.163). Tasmania's lower socio-economic profile vis-à-vis other Australian states and territories, discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, makes it a very appropriate choice for a study site.

The importance of psychological factors on educational participation has been highlighted (Marks, et al., 2000). These authors assert that psychological factors such as level of engagement in school life, academic self-concept and educational aspirations have often been neglected in models of educational participation and mention that they are more malleable to policy initiatives than socio-demographic and some educational factors (2000, p.43).

Research on family influence on educational participation has revealed the impact of several factors. Family educational and cultural resources have been shown to be strongly related to rates of early school leaving (Ainley et al., 1997). Marks and colleagues (2000) pointed to the importance of parental aspirations, and Abbott-Chapman and Baynes (2002) have identified the influence of the educational and employment experiences of older siblings. Kilpatrick and Abbott-Chapman (2002) suggested that although rural economic downturn and associated factors were important in explaining participation differences, family and community values surrounding education and their social capital are also involved.

These last mentioned studies suggest that further research be done to explore the factors that encourage low socio-economic background students to complete school (Year 12), to investigate the psychological factors impacting on education participation rates and to examine in detail the influence of family factors on educational participation. The research reported here follows up these suggested lines of inquiry.

Rurality

There has been much discussion of what constitutes a rural location in Australia and the definition and measurement of rurality has been described as notoriously difficult (James, et al., 1999). The debate has not been confined to the field of education as discussion has been linked with an increase in concern about the difficulties that people living in rural and remote areas face in accessing a variety of services that most Australians take for granted (Department of Health & Aged Care, 2001). Researchers in many fields concerned with providing services to people across the nation all seem to concede that measuring rurality or isolation is not a simple matter. As a result of this discussion several different definitions of rurality have been put forward, various methods of measuring rurality have been developed and their appropriateness and usefulness have been debated.

Most measures are based on population size and/or density and/or distance from the services provided in metropolitan, urban or provincial centres. Two indices developed in the early 1990s and widely used in research studies are the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Australian Standard Geographic Classification or ASGC (ABS, 1990) and the Department of Primary Industries and Energy's and Department of

Human Services and Health's Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas Classification: 1991 Census Edition, or RRMA (Department of Primary Industries and Energy & Department of Human Services and Health, 1994).

Both these classifications were found to have limitations. The ASGC was based on residential postcodes and it became apparent that this was problematic in some parts of the nation. In Tasmania for instance, some postcodes cover quite large areas and contain several separate and different residential areas that vary in their distance from the nearest metropolitan, urban or provincial centre. The RRMA was problematic because it was later realised that one of the basic assumptions - that increasing population size reflected increasing availability of services - was incorrect. A further problem was that distances were measured as a straight line connecting centres or places so did not truly reflect the access that people in one place would have to services in another. In addition the nature of the journey in terms of actual distance and the impact of various factors such as road conditions, terrain, climate and weather on travel time were not taken into account.

Two later classifications are the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia, or ARIA, developed in 1999 by the Department of Health and Aged Care and the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2001. This later version of ASGC adds the remoteness concepts of ARIA to the 1991 version of ASGS. Although these classifications are now considered out of date and a review of them has been announced recently, they were current and accepted at the time the student participants in the research were living in the five communities.

ARIA calculates remoteness as accessibility to service centres based on road distances. All populated localities in Australia have been allocated a value or score between 0 and 12 and grouped into five categories that describe their accessibility to goods, services and opportunities for social interaction (Highly Accessible, Accessible, Moderately Accessible, Remote and Very Remote). The ASGC remoteness structure describes localities in six categories (Major cities, Inner regional, Outer regional, Remote, Very remote, Migratory).

These classifications focus on the accessibility that people have to services, such as education, rather than focusing on the characteristics of populations or places. The definition of rural adopted for this research is aligned with the intent of these classifications. A rural community is one outside the capital city of Hobart and the other three major urban centres of Launceston, Devonport and Burnie. This is close to the definition of places as metropolitan or non-metropolitan, which is accepted and used widely by researchers (e.g. Marks, et al., 2000; Fullerton, et al., 2003).

The communities sampled from for this research have ARIA scores that place them in the Accessible and Moderately Accessible categories, indicating, respectively, some restrictions to accessibility of some goods, services and social opportunities or significantly restricted accessibility of goods, services and social opportunities. In ASGC terms one locality is categorised as Inner regional and the other four are categorised as Outer regional. Further detail appears in Chapter 2 in the discussion of the Tasmanian context for the research. All five of the communities are thus described as suffering some disadvantage because of their rural location. In terms of this research the disadvantage is not only on the dimension of access to education goods and services. There may also be disadvantage in terms of access to social networks of use in providing knowledge and information about PCET opportunities and career opportunities available elsewhere, that reinforce education and training aspirations and contain role models who have participated in PCET.

Research questions to be addressed

The research questions address some of the gaps in knowledge and understanding identified above.

- What role does social capital, particularly that available through family and community networks, play in shaping students' PCET aspirations?
- What role does social capital, particularly that available through family and community networks, play in encouraging or discouraging students' realisation of their PCET aspirations?
- How useful is the concept of social capital in understanding rural students' PCET careers?

Research orientation

This research examines the experiences of a group of Tasmanian rural high school students who are continuing with PCET initially in urban senior secondary colleges and have been encouraged by others to do so. The sample of 24 students represents 15% of the population of students from the five rural schools who were attending four urban senior secondary colleges (Years 11 and 12). Detail about their experiences in that process of transition from a rural high school to PCET in an urban centre was sought in interviews conducted in 2003 in Semester I of Year 12. An additional perspective on the students' experiences was gained from a larger group of family members and others in the students' communities and elsewhere, who had been nominated by the students as having encouraged them. A third phase of interviews was conducted with students approximately one year after their initial interviews, to follow up on their later experiences and progress in realising their PCET aspirations.

The research utilises the evolving concept of social capital, originally identified by Hanifan (1916), and further developed by Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988) and others more recently. The concept is used to investigate family and community factors that encourage Tasmanian rural students to persist with PCET. This approach allows the psychological factors that Marks and colleagues (2000) asserted were currently not being included, to be taken into account and to be explored in depth.

This research utilises ideas from Coleman (1988) and others in examining whether social capital in the community encourages students who are not being encouraged to a high degree by their family. However the approach adapts Coleman's ideas by also examining whether social capital in the community can result in additional benefits to those students who are being encouraged by their families.

A secondary concern of this research is to examine the situation in each of the five communities to assess whether social capital exists that is deterring some students from continuing with PCET. For instance, whether close ties among some families work against students' desires to pursue PCET in an urban area. This may be the case where extended family are also resident in the same community or nearby communities, where a family has lived in the area for generations and perhaps farmed or run a business and the student is expected to continue the family tradition.

Family employment loyalties and connections may be an example of a 'dark side' of social capital (Ostrom in Putzel, 1997, p.944; Portes, 1998). Close attachments to family and others in the community and a sense of belonging to the rural community (Stokes & Tyler, 2002) may reflect social capital that has a negative effect on students' PCET participation.

The research stems from the idea that system- and school-based reforms may have had their major effect on participation rates and that pursuing other avenues may be fruitful. Levels of family and community encouragement may be one way remaining to influence participation rates and perhaps is one that has not been fully utilised. Schuller (2007) has noted the value of social capital in introducing new ways to address research issues and combining different political or disciplinary perspectives.

Previous research has found that rural students were likely to experience lower levels of encouraging factors for remaining in education and were more likely to perceive 'discouraging inhibitors and barriers' than urban students (James et al., 1999, p. xvi). These authors also expressed the view that boosting the encouraging factors is likely to be more critical in achieving long term gains in participation (1999, p.93). Examining the experiences of a group of rural students who have been encouraged to continue with PCET would be an important addition to our knowledge. The higher levels of Tasmanian PCET participation since the mid-1990s (ABS, 1992-2000) suggest it is timely to investigate factors encouraging rural students to continue as a range of rural students' views of their encouragement should be readily available.

As mentioned a need to encourage students from low socio-economic backgrounds to complete school has been identified (Marks, et al., 2000) and a requirement for long term strategies to ensure equitable access to higher education for rural and low socio-economically disadvantaged students has been expressed (Postle, et al., 1997). The Tasmanian rural students surveyed in this research were largely expected to come from such backgrounds. Findings will help to determine what factors encouraged these students, who are likely to face educational disadvantage caused by both locational and socio-economic factors, to complete their schooling.

The research addresses the issue of increasing PCET participation which is vital for the state's economic future, and also for Australia's global competitiveness. The

research is also being conducted at an opportune time; at the time the research commenced, Tasmania was experiencing a broadly based upturn in economic activity (Eslake, 2002), so the chances of increasing human capital investments, and thus achieving improvements and gains, is heightened. Optimism in the economy may predispose students to invest in PCET as the likelihood of employment after completion increases - though the fact that PCET participation oscillates against the economic cycle may also have an impact at the individual level with an increased number of jobs available without the need for qualifications.

The positive approach taken in this research is in contrast with much previous research which, quite rightly, concentrated on barriers facing rural students who wished to continue with PCET. Findings from that research enabled removal or reduction of barriers. Improvements have also been achieved through research attention to factors that assist rural young people in overcoming disadvantage especially in the education system. This research focuses on both the experiences of Tasmanian rural students who have continued with PCET in an urban area and have been encouraged by others to continue, and also on the processes of developing and realising their PCET aspirations. There is an emphasis on the part played by the rural students' families, schools and people in their communities in this process, and in particular the role of students' relationships and networks within their families, schools and communities in encouraging them to persist with PCET, often under trying circumstances. This research will gather detailed knowledge about the experiences of students in developing and realising PCET aspirations and the influence of people in the students' families and communities on their PCET decisions. This approach has the potential to increase our understanding of the nature of relationships that rural students have with other people and the use they make of them when making career/future decisions. This small-scale, qualitative research deals with the issues of regional variations in PCET participation in an in-depth and detailed way and findings can be used to complement results from larger scale, quantitative studies.

Limitations of the research

The purpose of this qualitative research is to understand the particular circumstances of a sample of Tasmanian rural school students during their transition from a rural high school to PCET in an urban senior secondary college with the focus on

students' experiences in the initial three years of PCET immediately after Year 10. The purposive sampling strategy chosen means that the generalisability of the findings is restricted. It is not intended that the findings be broadly and generally useful and applicable to other students in other settings, though wider potential may be suggested for some. Although the original intention was to include in the sample students proceeding to PCET of all types, this was not possible for reasons discussed later in Chapter 4. The sample consisted of students continuing to PCET at senior secondary colleges only and did not include any continuing directly from school to TAFE institutions or to a VET course through a registered training organisation. As non-college pathways are taken by only a very small proportion of students continuing with PCET this was not considered to be a serious drawback. However, as a result findings from this research relate to rural students who initially continue to senior secondary college-based PCET (and are representative of the vast majority of continuing students) and are exclusive of the very small proportion of students proceeding directly from Year 10 to TAFE studies.

Like all qualitative research, this thesis is a personal interpretation of the research participants' views and thus represents one of a number of possible interpretations of reality. Although a genuine attempt is made to identify personal biases, values and interests and documented techniques are used to check the accuracy of findings with participants, other interpretations of the findings are possible. These methodology issues are discussed further in Chapter 4 Methodology.

Significance of the research

Previous research has indicated the need for further attention to rural PCET participation issues. The rural population continues to be under-represented in higher education, the degree of rurality continues to impact on students' PCET aspirations and consequently on participation rates, and government policy continues to focus on broadening participation. Tasmania is of interest as a research site as particular characteristics of both population distribution and location of PCET provision in the state impact upon participation rates.

This research explores some of the avenues flagged in previous research as relevant to be pursued. It focuses on encouraging factors that have been suggested as most likely to achieve long term gains in PCET participation rates. There is emphasis on

psychological factors, such as students' educational aspirations, that previous research suggests are more malleable to policy initiatives. Outcomes of the research include the suggestion of strategies to progress toward more equal representation of geographically isolated, socio-economically disadvantaged and rural groups in PCET which have been called for by earlier work.

Previous research has shown that school students' aspirations for higher education are influenced by a subtle web of interwoven characteristics, and that the precise composition of that web and the relative strengths of its many strands are both localised and highly personal (James, et al., (1999, p.ii). This research represents a very fine examination of Tasmanian rural students' experiences of the initial years of PCET. It consists of an investigation of students from five localities where retention to PCET is promoted by the schools, indeed was increasing when student participants began participating in PCET, but has potential for further improvement. The emphasis on the student perspective and the highly specific nature of the inquiry was designed to bear fruit in terms of increasing understanding of rural transition from the point of view of students and also providing suggestions for strategies that will be tailored to the needs of students in those localities. Wider potential exists for use of some of the suggestions and strategies to support the transition from high school to a PCET qualification of other rural students and perhaps students from lower socio-economic backgrounds elsewhere.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1

The introductory chapter presents the background to the research, the research orientation and the significance and limitations of the research.

Chapter 2

This chapter contains a detailed description of the particular context in which the research is situated and presents a broad profile of and key statistics for the five Tasmanian communities from which participants were sampled.

Chapter 3

Literature concerning the patterns of PCET, the influences on rural participation, and the possible contribution of the concept of social capital to the understanding of rural PCET participation is reviewed in this chapter.

Chapter 4

The methodology chapter outlines the research approach for this small-scale, intensive and qualitative study. The social constructionist perspective and the phenomenological and ethnographic methods are described.

Chapter 5

The first findings chapter contains a description and discussion of three types of student initial PCET experience identified using thematic coding of interview transcripts and focus group discussions. Issues underlying participation and demands competing with students' PCET aspirations are discussed.

Chapter 6

The second findings chapter assesses the social capital available to students in family and community networks, their awareness of and willingness to access that social capital and the extent of their use of that social capital.

Chapter 7

The final chapter contains a review of the research problem, a note of the limitations of the research, a discussion of the findings regarding the three research questions, and the conclusions of the research. Recommendations for action are put forward and suggestions made for further research.

Chapter 2: Tasmanian context and patterns of post-compulsory education and training participation

Introduction

Structural characteristics of the education system and demographic factors in Tasmania have a considerable influence on young people's participation in PCET. Government school education in Tasmania is provided in three levels – primary school from Kindergarten to Year 6, secondary or high school for Years 7 to 10 and senior secondary college for Years 11 and 12 (DET, 2005). In most rural areas combined schools, also known as district high schools, provide education from Kindergarten to Year 10 and may also offer limited senior secondary courses. In a very small number of rural areas there is the usual primary/secondary divide in school education provision but again the high schools also offer limited senior secondary courses. Three of the schools featured in this research are combined schools and two are high schools. Senior secondary education is provided in colleges located in the four major urban centres.

The minimum age at which Tasmanian students may leave school is 16 years and the majority of students attain this age during Year 10. Compulsory schooling therefore is generally regarded as complete at the end of Year 10. Historically, the fact that in rural areas schooling is available for the compulsory years only, combined with the difficulties for rural students in continuing with education outside the local area has resulted in the perception by some rural students and families of Year 10 as the end of schooling, and of Years 11 and 12 being additional schooling for the more academically inclined. This in turn has affected young people's participation in the Year 11 and 12 component of post-compulsory education.

More recently local provision of senior secondary education in rural Tasmania has expanded substantially. However the education and training centres now existing in several rural towns are not senior secondary colleges and do not offer a large range of courses. In order to attend senior secondary college rural students must either travel daily to, or relocate to live in Hobart, Launceston, Devonport or Burnie. The two-tier secondary education arrangement described above, contrasts with the situation in most other states and territories.

In addition to factors relating to the structure of the Tasmanian education system, the disjunction between where people are living and where PCET institutions are sited affects participation. The urban location of the senior secondary colleges and TAFE institutions combines with the relatively dispersed nature of population distribution to negatively impact on PCET participation rates. In the 1980s Tasmanian students were less likely to continue to PCET than students in most other parts of Australia (ABS 1970; 1975; 1980; 1985) and although the situation improved during the 1990s Tasmanian participation rates were mostly still below the national average (ABS 1990; 1995). Details of Tasmanian PCET participation rates and their relative ranking within Australia are presented later in this Chapter.

Tasmania has the most rurally dispersed population of all the states and territories, in terms of the proportion of the population living outside the capital city and major urban centres. When data were collected (2003-2005), over half (58%) of the population lived outside the capital city and almost a quarter (21%) lived outside the four urban centres of Hobart, Launceston, Devonport and Burnie (ABS, 2005a). Outside the urban centres people live in very much smaller settlements. The next largest settlement (widely considered a suburb of Hobart) had around 14,000 people, five others had a population between 4000 and 10,000 and 26 settlements had a population of 1000 to 2000. The majority of settlements had less than 1000 people.

With regard to access to services available only in the larger urban centres (as measured by the remoteness and accessibility indices described in Chapter 1 which were current when students were attending school), the communities sampled from for this research have ARIA scores that place them in the Accessible and Moderately Accessible categories, and in ASGC terms one is categorised as Inner regional and the other four are categorised as Outer regional, as shown in Table 2. 1, overleaf. Actual names of the study sites have been replaced by pseudonyms, as will be fully outlined in Chapter 4, Methodology.

Table 2.1: ARIA & ASGC classification of areas around the five towns

Town	ARIA score of the area	ARIA category (Accessibility/Remoteness of the area)	ASGC RA category (Remoteness) of the area
Chatfield	3.7801	Moderately Accessible	Outer regional
Gardiner	3.3540	Accessible	Outer regional
Pieman	3.0273	Accessible	Outer regional
Point Hibbs	1.9993 & 2.1459*	Accessible	Inner regional
Vincent	3.9437	Moderately Accessible	Outer regional

* The ARIA classification is based on ABS Statistical Local Areas. The area around Point Hibbs has two separate Statistical Local Areas therefore there are two ARIA values.

The ARIA category 'Accessible' describes the location in terms of some restrictions to accessibility of some goods, services and opportunities for social interaction and 'Moderately Accessible' as having significantly restricted accessibility of goods, services and opportunities for social interaction.

Social indicators show that in a number of ways Tasmania is one of the most economically depressed regions in Australia. Unemployment rates were steady at around 8.8% during 1999-2003 but decreased to 6.9% in 2004 (ABS, 2005b). Youth unemployment rates are considerably higher. In 2003-2004 15.1% of 15-19 year-olds considered to be in the labour force were unemployed (ABS, 2005b).

Until the mid 1990s Tasmanian school participation rates were lower than many states/territories and the national average (ABS, 2001). The marked improvement that has occurred since then (ABS, 2008) has been one of the stimuli for this research. Greater numbers of rural students were among those choosing to remain in PCET and this increased the pool of prospective students from which to sample for the research.

Profile of the five communities from which participants are drawn

This section is intended to assist in forming a picture of the Tasmanian rural students and their families and the communities in which they are living. The five communities featured in this research are located in the south, east, north-east and north of the state. Chatfield is a small town with a population of 700 and an economy based around the forestry and fishing industries. There is also employment in the horticulture, farming, aquaculture and service/retail sectors. Tourism and viticulture are emerging as a source of further jobs. It is one-and-a half hours

travelling time by bus to the nearest urban centre. Gardiner with a population of just under 2000 people is the largest town in its region and the major industries in the area are vegetable growing/processing and forestry. The service/retail sector also provides employment in the area. Bus travel to the nearest urban centre takes one-and-three-quarter hours. Point Hibbs is the largest of the five towns in the study having a population slightly over 4000 and is one of the largest in the region. It is home to two major manufacturing industries. Employment is also available in light industry and manufacturing, crop and livestock farming, service/retail, forestry and seafood processing. Viticulture and tourism are providing an increasing number of jobs. Point Hibbs is situated within 45 minutes bus travel of the nearest urban centre. Pieman has a population of almost 2000 people and is the largest of four towns in the region. Agriculture and horticulture form the primary basis of the economy along with employment in the service/retail sector, forestry and aquaculture. The tourism and viticulture industries are of emerging importance as sources of employment. Bus travel to the nearest urban centre takes 55 minutes. Vincent is one of the two large towns in its region having a population of 1800. The fishing, timber and tourism industries form the basis of the economy, supported by employment in the aquaculture, agriculture, mining, service/retail sector and more recently jobs in the viticulture industry. It is the most remote of the five towns in the study being two-and-a half hours from one urban centre and four hours from another.

It should be noted here that the travel times indicated above are to or from the urban centres and the town where the school is situated only. However students are drawn from a much larger surrounding area. For instance the travel time from the senior secondary college to the end of the school bus route beyond Pieman is one hour and 50 minutes (i.e. a further hour). In some instances no further bus transport is available from the settlement and students must rely on parents or other family for transport for the remainder of the journey. For example, one student mentioned a half-hour car journey between the bus stop in Gardiner and his home.

Key statistics for the five communities

Education and training background

The people in the areas around the five Tasmanian towns have relatively low levels of formal education and qualifications compared with the population of the nation as a whole, as detailed in Haberkorn, Kelson, Tottenham and Magpantay (2004).

Gardiner, Point Hibbs and Vincent are in areas with the lowest incidence in the nation of people with bachelor degree qualifications (less than 6.7% hold such qualifications) and Chatfield and Pieman are in areas with the second lowest incidence (between 6.7% and 7.9% hold such qualifications) Higher proportions of the people in the areas around the five towns have vocational qualifications (11-13%) and this is consistent with other non-metropolitan areas which have higher proportions (13.9%) than for Australia overall (11.5%) (Haberkorn, et al., 2004). In the areas surrounding all five towns the proportion of people without any post-school qualifications was 5-20% above the non-metropolitan average for Australia, or 60.8-69.4% of the population was without a post-school qualification. This compares with a figure of 53.8% for Australia as a whole and 57.8% in non-metropolitan areas (Haberkorn, et al., 2004).

The fact that people in non-metropolitan areas have recognised the need for PCET qualifications is demonstrated.

Between 1996 and 2001 the increase in the number of people holding higher education qualifications was higher for non-metropolitan regions (up 33.5%) than for metropolitan areas (31.8%). ... Over the same period there is a sharp contrast between the increase in vocational qualifications amongst non-metropolitan regions (up 2.4%) and a substantial decline for metropolitan areas (down 5%) (Haberkorn, et al., 2004, p.xii).

Family economic circumstances

The people in the areas around all five towns have incomes below the national average and in four of them incomes are well below this. In terms of mean taxable income in the 1999-2000 financial year (when student participants were attending high school) the people in and around Chatfield, Gardiner, Pieman and Vincent had incomes 5-20% below the average for non-metropolitan areas (Haberkorn, et al., 2004). This translates into an annual income of between \$26,826 and \$31,855 and means that on average people in those areas are living on an income that is approximately 72-85% of the mean taxable income of all Australians. It is relevant to note here that 13 of the 24 students (54%) came from single-income families.

The proportion of low income households in the areas around the five towns is also high (Haberkorn et al., 2004). In the Chatfield and Vincent areas the proportion is

more than 20% above the non-metropolitan average (greater than 19.6% of all households are classed as low income households). This is the category of highest incidence of low income families in Australia. In the Gardiner and Pieman areas the proportion is 5-20% above the non-metropolitan average (or 17.2-19.6% of households are low income households). This is the category of second highest incidence nationally of low income families. The costs of attending senior secondary college or other PCET away from home may be beyond the financial capability of many families in areas around the five towns, and would likely place considerable strain on others.

The areas around all five towns have high proportions of families in receipt of government assistance of various kinds. In and around Pieman and Vincent the proportion is more than 50.6%, well above that of non-metropolitan areas (42.2%) and of the nation (39.4%), and is the category of highest incidence of families receiving government financial assistance in Australia (Haberkorn, et al., 2004).

Socio-economic background

The areas around all five towns are socio-economically disadvantaged in comparison with the rest of Australia (Haberkorn et al., 2004). These authors used the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) index to rate social and economic wellbeing across Australia. The index takes into account variables relating to income, education, employment/unemployment, occupation, wealth, family expenditure and living conditions. The areas around all five towns are below the non-metropolitan average, with Vincent and its surrounds rated at the level of the second most extreme socio-economic disadvantage (5-20% below the non-metropolitan average) and Chatfield, Gardiner, Point Hibbs and Pieman and surrounding areas are up to 5% below that average (Haberkorn, et al., 2004). The social and economic wellbeing of people in and around these five towns is seriously compromised.

Youth unemployment

Haberkorn and colleagues (2004, p.40) note that Australia's youth unemployment rate in 2001 was 13.8% which was almost twice the national average unemployment rate (i.e. all ages) of 7.4%. However the rate of youth unemployment is declining – down from 15.7% in 1996 and 19.5% in 1991. This may be a general reflection of

young people's knowledge about the tightness of the labour market for school leavers (Lamb, et al., 2004). It may also indicate both young people's realisation that low status service occupations are the only option for early school leavers (i.e. those leaving before Year 12 completion), and community confidence in PCET as a means for personal development and career opportunity (James, 2000, p.vii).

Very high levels of youth unemployment are observed in the areas around Chatfield, Gardiner, Point Hibbs and Vincent (a rate of more than 19.1%, representing the highest incidence category in Australia) and the area around Pieman is in the category with the second highest incidence (16.8%-19.1% unemployed) (Haberkorn, et al., 2004). These communities are very disadvantaged in terms of jobs for young people compared with Australia as a whole (13.8% are unemployed) and other non-metropolitan areas (15.9%) and students are likely to be well aware of the need for and benefits of PCET participation.

Brief history of rural post-compulsory education and training participation in Australia

As indicated in Chapter 1, an early indication of research concern in Australia about rural post-compulsory educational participation came in the 1970s with the Karmel report *Schools in Australia* (ICASC, 1973). This report detailed the facts of educational disadvantage in rural Australia in terms of length of schooling, participation in higher education and below average achievement.

A considerable body of research has amassed in the intervening decades, revealing that students in rural areas have lower levels of PCET participation than urban students. Research attention has concentrated on two particular aspects that were problematic in terms of rural students' participation. There has been a focus on identifying the difficulties rural students faced in participating in education and training at this level and research aims were directed at developing strategies to remove or reduce structural barriers to rural students' participation (Darnell & Simpson, 1981; James, et al., 1999). Reforms to curricula, assessment and teaching arising from this research have been linked with the most rapid rise in school retention (Ainley, et al., 1997). Other research sought to determine the factors that assisted rural young people in overcoming disadvantage especially in the education system, (e.g. Withers & Batten, 1988; Abbott-Chapman, et al., 1991, 1992; Batten, et

al., 1991; Patterson & Abbott-Chapman, 1992). The sustained improvement in rural PCET participation rates is testimony to the efforts of researchers and to educational policy makers and practitioners in the schools implementation of researchers' recommendations, over several decades.

Despite all these efforts PCET participation rates, both of rural students and students overall, had not, in 2001, reached the high levels regarded as necessary for young people to be successful in the competitive labour market and for Australia to be able to compete in the global economy (Curtain, 2001). The rates at that time also fell short of the targets for PCET participation set in 1991 by Australian and state governments (AEC, 1991) which in addition by then were also rated "seriously out of date and represent(ing) a level of attainment that is far behind the threshold education benchmark of upper secondary school completion or the equivalent set by leading OECD countries (Curtain, 2001, p.16). The literature clearly indicates that continued effort needs to be directed toward further improvement in PCET participation rates, and especially those of rural students.

The benefits, both to society and to the individual, of staying on at school and completing Year 12 have been well documented. Briefly these are economic benefits (building the stock of skills in the economy), benefits to social wellbeing and benefits to individual wellbeing (e.g. Cullen, 1998) especially the access that is provided to higher education and other types of further study (e.g. Ainley, et al., 1997). The disadvantages have also been highlighted. The demand for labour has shifted in favour of skilled workers so that early school leavers are likely to find themselves at a disadvantage in the current labour market (Curtain, 1998; Ainley, et al., 1997; McKenzie, 2000). A further disadvantage is that early school leavers are likely to find that they lack the foundations skills to take advantage of further education and training opportunities (OECD, 1997; McKenzie, 2000). Rural students as a group however, remain somewhat resistant to participating in PCET.

The literature has revealed many influences on the pattern of PCET participation besides rural or regional location. These include individual factors such as student racial and socio-economic background, gender, school achievement in the compulsory years, school type and broader factors such as the current state of the economy and the availability of work for young people. However, some of these

factors (e.g. socio-economic background and the local availability of work for young people) combine with rural or regional location and increase the disadvantage of many rural students.

Patterns of post-compulsory education and training participation in Australia

Four research studies examining patterns of PCET participation, changes to those patterns and influences on them will now be discussed to provide further detail. Marks and colleagues (2000) used national data from the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY) program in their investigation of changes in the pattern of and influences on participation during the 20 years prior to their study. Rurality was among issues they identified as relevant to educational participation. (Others were ethnicity, indigenous status, socio-economic background, part-time work, individual schools and psychological factors.) Students living in non-metropolitan areas in Year 9 were found to be less likely than those living in metropolitan areas to participate in Year 12 (Marks et al. 2000, p.v). A gap of about 10 percentage points in favour of the urban students was found in the rates between the most urban and the most rural groups of students.

Another study using LSAY data indicated the impact of labour market changes, economic recession and changes in welfare and curriculum policy on lowering non-completion rates during the 1980s and early 1990s (Lamb, et al., 2000). The authors noted that this led to changes in the profiles of non-completers (students not completing Year 12), the reasons given for non-completion, and education and work outcomes. By the mid-1990s non-completers remained over-represented by those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, rural areas, government schools and English-speaking families (2000, p.vii). Another finding was the increased representation of these groups: males from rural areas comprised 34% of non-completers in the early 1980s but by the mid-1990s this had risen to 41%. The comparable increase for females was from 35% to 44% (2000, p.21).

A third and subsequent research study shows that rural students' lower participation rates persisted. McMillan and Marks (2003, p.26) found that students from non-metropolitan areas were less likely to complete senior secondary school than their urban counterparts. In particular they noted that the odds of rural/remote Year 9

students becoming early school leavers were 2.6 times those of their metropolitan counterparts and the corresponding figure for regional students was 1.7 times. The specific issue of students dropping out of education and training during the senior secondary years is raised. Regional, rural and remote students who commenced Year 11 were found to be more likely than metropolitan students to leave before the completion of Year 12 (McMillan & Marks, 2003, p.28).

In the final study to be considered here, Fullerton and colleagues revealed that between 1980 and 1992 there was a substantial increase in overall Year 12 participation and an accompanying reduction in inequality of participation (2003, p.57). However, since then overall levels of participation in Year 12 have fallen slightly and then stabilised. Predictions are that the size of the influence on participation of student background is unlikely to change (Fullerton et al 2003, p.57).

With regard to post-Year 12 participation, students living in non-metropolitan areas were less likely than those living in metropolitan areas to participate in higher education (Marks, et al., 2000, p.v;). There was a gap of about 10 percentage points in favour of the urban students. Like the difference between rural and urban students in participation until Year 12 completion this difference still remains. Compared with metropolitan Year 12 students, regional students were 1.4 times less likely to progress to higher education, and rural/remote students were 1.6 times less likely to progress to higher education in the immediate post-school years (McMillan & Marks, 2003, p.28).

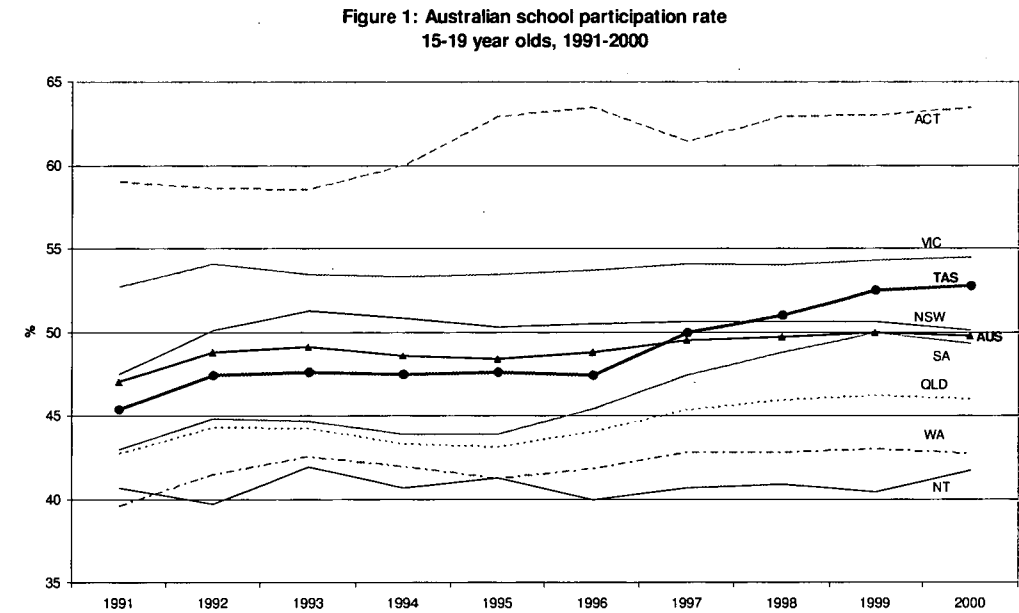
These four studies highlight the comprehensive nature of the differences between the PCET participation of rural and urban students. Khoo and Ainley (2005) confirm that non-metropolitan students continue to be less likely to participate in higher education.

Tasmanian post-compulsory education and training participation

Tasmanian rates of participation in PCET followed the national upwardly trending pattern in the 1990s. This decade coincides approximately with the time when the student participants in this research were attending primary school (between 1991 and 1997) and high school (between 1998 and 2001).

During this time the Tasmanian school participation rate of 15-19 year olds was consistently lower than the ACT, Victoria, New South Wales and the national average, as shown in Figure 2.1 below. However the improvement referred to in Chapter 1, and being exploited in this research, is clearly seen. Figure 2.1 also highlights the higher level of Tasmanian participation between 1996 and 2000 that placed Tasmania above New South Wales and the national average.

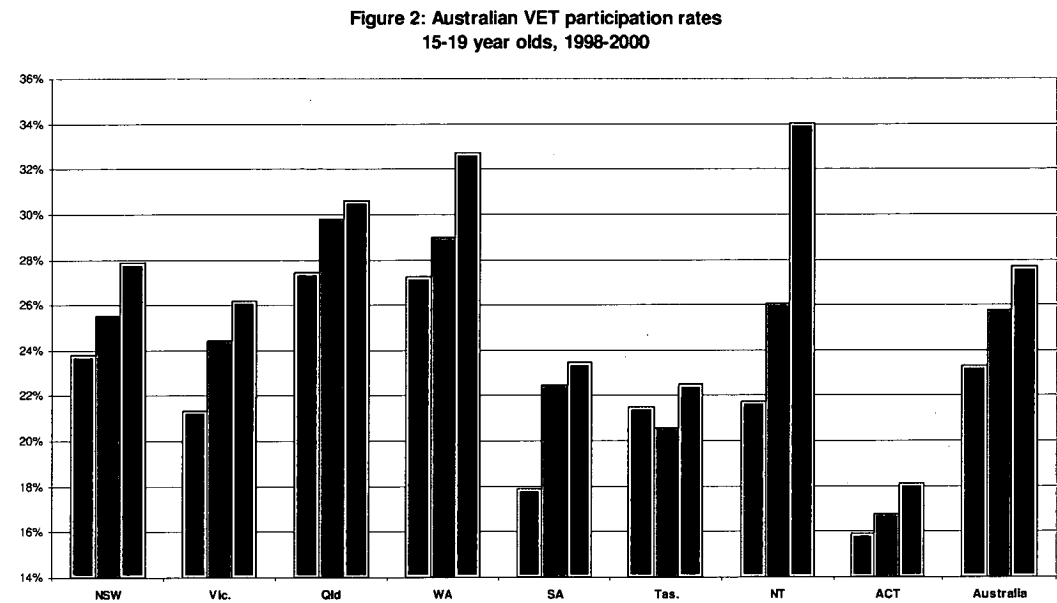
Figure 2.1: Australian school participation rates for 15-19 year olds, 1991 - 2000



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Schools 4221.0 1992 –2000. Full time students only.

In terms of participation in VET when students in this research were attending high school, Tasmanian young people did not compare favourably with other young Australians. National participation rates for 1998-2000 are shown in Figure 2.2, overleaf.

Figure 2.2: Australian VET participation rates for 15-19 year olds, 1998-2000



Source: NCVER participation by age as at 30 June. ABS Estimated Resident Population by Age & Sex 3201.01-3201.09

Figure 2.2 shows that the Tasmanian VET participation rate was lower than most states and territories with the exception of the ACT, and well below most of them. There was not a progressive increase each year as in other states and territories, and the level of gain was not as marked as most other states and territories.

Comparisons of school participation rates in rural and regional or non-metropolitan parts of Australia have been made (Haberkorn et al., 2004). In 2001 a number of areas in Tasmania were more than 20% below the national non-metropolitan average in terms of 16-year-olds in full time education, much of rural and regional Tasmania was 5-20% below the national non-metropolitan average and other areas ranged from 5% below to 5% above that average. Of the towns included in this research, Gardiner and Point Hibbs are in areas where the school participation rate was more than 20% below the national non-metropolitan average, Pieman is in an area where the rate was 5-20% below that average and Chatfield and Vincent are in areas where the rate was 5% below to 5% above that average (Haberkorn, 2004).

As in other parts of the nation drop-out during senior secondary schooling has been noted. In Tasmania almost a third of students who began Year 11 in 2002 failed to complete the year and continue on to Year 12 (DET, 2004b, p.3).

Within the state there are regional differences in PCET participation. The 1998 direct retention rates from Year 10 to Year 11 (i.e. the number of students who continue on as a proportion of the cohort size) from a report *Post-Compulsory Education in Tasmania, Draft Recommendations* (DET, 1999, p.13) indicated that the southern region of Tasmania had the highest rate of participation (78.9%) followed by the north-west (70.2%), then the north (66.4%). A report published at the time these students were participating in the initial years of PCET (DET, 2004a, p.13) shows that the regional pattern had persisted. For the 2001 cohort of Year 10 students, lowest rates of early leaving occurred in southern Tasmania, where 12.0% of females and 16.7% of males left in the transition from Year 10 to Year 11. The corresponding figures for the north were 14.4% and 26.1%, and for the north-west 19.9% and 25.2%. The gender differences may reflect the easier access to employment opportunities that exist for early leaving males compared with females suggested in research based on a broader student population (i.e. not only rural students) (Collins, Kenway & McLeod, 2000).

Variations by school district within Tasmania were shown (DET, 1999, p.13). For instance direct retention from Year 10 to Year 11 in 1998 ranged from 81.9% in one southern district to 65.9% in a northern district. Variation among schools ranged from 100% to 34%. These variations continued (DET, 2004a). Districts in the south with the lowest rates of early leaving were those in and around Hobart. The rates of early leaving in the south generally increase as the distance from Hobart increases. Two of the outlying areas had rates over 20%. Rates across the north-west region were high, with all except the Burnie local government area being above 20%. The rates in northern Tasmania were higher than in most districts in the south. Two outlying areas in the north had rates over 20% and all but one of the other areas ranged from 15-19%.

The findings of the later report (DET, 2004a) indicate that region is a major influence on the patterns of early leaving and that it tends to over-ride the effects of other factors. After controlling for achievement, early leaving rates for the north and

north-west were shown still to remain higher than those for the south. Only 1% of southern students in the high achieving quintile leave early compared with 3% in the north and north-west. For students in the middle achievement quintile the figures are 8% for southern students, 15% for northern students and 19% for north-western students. The corresponding figures for students in the low achievement quintile are 24%, 36% and 35% respectively.

The report suggests that the regional differences in rates of early leaving for students with similar achievement levels may be explained by the different norms related to school aspirations held by the different regional communities (DET, 2004a, p.15). There was a further suggestion that these norms might be driven by differences in labour market opportunities, industry structure, population education levels, senior school provision and historical patterns of early leaving. This research explores issues regarding student and family norms and their relationship to students' PCET aspirations.

Participation rates have continued to improve slightly in the 2000s. In Tasmania in 2004, the year most of the student participants in the research completed Year 12, data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' publication *Schools Australia* (2008, p.30) indicated that the state's school participation rate for 15-19 year olds was 56.1%, behind those of the ACT (63.7%) and Victoria (57.2%) but above the national average of 51.7% and the remaining states/territories. The 2007 school participation rates showed slight improvement but Tasmania was similarly placed in comparison with the rest of Australia – Tasmania, 56.5%; ACT, 65.8%; Victoria, 58.6% with a national average of 51.9%. The rate of VET participation of 15-19 year old Tasmanians also increased from 19.5% in 2003 to 25.5% in 2007 but Tasmania remained below the national average (26.5% in 2003 and 30.1% in 2007) and below that of all other states except Queensland, which it equalled, and the Northern Territory (National Centre for Vocational Education and Training [NCVER], 2008)]. Potential clearly exists for the encouragement from family and people in the local community for students to continue with PCET to assume greater importance as an influence on participation rates.

Summary

This chapter outlines and discusses some of the factors that are peculiar to Tasmania and that impact upon the rates and pattern of young people's participation in all forms of PCET. Both structural features of the state education system and demographic factors are important and related influences. The two-tier secondary education arrangement described at the beginning of this chapter provides an opportunity for students and families to perceive PCET as an alternative and additional option. This has a negative impact on PCET participation. The limited provision of PCET in rural areas combined with the fact that a large proportion of the population lives outside the four urban centres and faces some difficulty in participating in PCET has a further deleterious effect on PCET participation.

The social and economic situation in each of the five communities is described in some detail to assist in fully understanding the students, their families and their circumstances. People living in the five rural areas were characterised by relatively low levels of formal education and qualifications compared with the nation as a whole. Their incomes were below the national average, and they were socio-economically disadvantaged compared with those living elsewhere. Finally, youth unemployment levels were amongst the highest in the nation.

The following chapter consists of a review of several fields of literature pertinent to the research.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Introduction: Critical changes in Australian post-compulsory education and training participation since the 1980s

The overall (i.e. rural and urban) PCET participation literature reviewed in this chapter is largely that dated from the 1990s onwards as that marks the approximate date of the beginning of a significant change in Australian young people's views about staying on or leaving school. By the early 1990s "a widespread commitment among secondary students to completing Year 12 and to continuing their education and training after leaving school" was noted (DEET, 1994, p.1). Although this change was mentioned in connection with students in New South Wales, it was taking place concurrently in many other parts of Australia. Hannan and colleagues also commented on this change in relation to students from urban and rural parts of New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia; "Until the end of the 1980s the majority left school before Year 12. Now, as far as young people are concerned, staying at school is the norm" (1995, p.1).

Australian government education policies, and amendments to these policies, during the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s played a considerable role in this increased participation. In recognising the role of the education and training system in responding to the economic challenges facing Australia in the 1980s the government's objectives described in *Skills for Australia* (Dawkins & Holding, 1987) included increasing participation in education and training generally, improvements to the quality, structure and flexibility of education and training arrangements, and improving education and training for disadvantaged groups.

In *Strengthening Australia's Schools* the government committed to shaping schools so they could provide young Australians with the knowledge and skills they would need in life and to seek ways to improve the quality, relevance and effectiveness of schools (Dawkins, 1988a, p.1). The nationwide approach was reflected in giving priority to the development of a common curriculum framework, a national approach to assessment, increasing the number of students completing school (i.e. Year 12), and overcoming inequity. Financial assistance for needy students was increased. In 1987 Austudy was introduced to help low income students stay in school until the end of high school (Year 12) and then gain a post-secondary school qualification,

and the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme was aimed to help students needing to live away from home to study. In 1991 Australian and state governments set Australian targets for PCET attainment for 19- and 22-year-olds (AEC, 1991). By 2001, 95% of 19-year-olds were to be participating in Year 12, or have completed Year 12, or have completed Year 10 or 11 and were to be participating in or completing some formally recognised education and training.

An expansion of higher education was announced in 1988 (Dawkins, 1988b). This included allocation of additional funding, creating more student places, improving access and student financial support, increasing funding for equity objectives, and the introduction of the unified national system of higher education. In 1990 the Australian government policy document, *A Fair Chance for All*, identified six equity target groups, including those living in rural and isolated areas (DEET, 1990). A range of incentives was developed to assist students in these groups to enrol and participate in university study and the participation rates of the groups were closely monitored by government and universities.

In the VET sector a number of funding and policy changes in the late 1980s and early 1990s impacted on the participation of 15-19-year-olds. Traineeships were introduced in 1985, the Training Guarantee Act was passed in 1990 and an Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) agreement in 1993 brought changes in inter-government arrangements for the governance and management of TAFE based on a national cooperative system. The Australian government injected an additional \$70 million of growth funds in each year from 1993 to the VET sector.

The positive effect of the introduction of the Australian government's equity and participation policies described above was seen from the 1990s. Year 12 completion rates increased as did the rate of transition to higher education, and an increase in rural participation rates was part of this. As revealed in the discussion in Chapter 2, the rates remained relatively steady in the 2000s with a few states/territories experiencing a drop in participation rate (ABS, 2008). These figures highlight the continuing relevance of the topic of this thesis and the continuing need for research to seek ways to further increase participation rates. The need to increase PCET participation rates is highlighted further when comparing Australian education and training attainment with other OECD countries. Australia ranks 20th out of 30 OECD

countries for the proportion of 25-34 year-olds with an upper secondary education or higher (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2005) and trails many by a considerably margin. In almost a quarter of these countries over 90% of 25-34 year-olds have attained at least this level of education and in 40% of the countries 85% or more have achieved this whereas the corresponding figure for Australia is 75% (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2005, p. 60).

Main emphases in subsequent research

Research interest in overall PCET participation has been concentrated on gaining a better general understanding of students' perceptions about and attitudes toward the various forms of post-Year 10 education and training (e.g. ANOP, 1993, 1994; NBEET, 1995; Hannan, et al., 1995; Harvey-Beavis & Robinson, 2000; Khoo & Ainley, 2005). Students' aspirations for PCET were the focus of another group of studies (e.g. Beavis, et al., 2004; James, 2002) and other researchers examined factors that influence students' perceptions, attitudes, aspirations and the decisions they make regarding PCET (e.g. Pascoe, 1996; James, et al., 1999; Marks, et al., 2000; Stevenson, et al., 2001; Fullerton, et al., 2003; McMillan & Marks, 2003; Lamb, et al., 2004). In combination these different approaches have made a significant contribution to our overall understanding of overall patterns of PCET participation in Australia. They explain in general terms; however, the participation of specific groups of students such as rural students is not necessarily fully accounted for.

Much of the research discussed above has been in the form of large quantitative studies that have documented broad reasons that explain lower rates of participation in PCET generally. Whilst analysis of Australian PCET data at the national or state/territory level of aggregation allows some trends to become apparent, the demographic and socio-economic diversity that exists within the country is often masked (Golding & Pattison, 2004, p.108). Particular note has been made of regional and school-related variations in levels of retention that can be hidden behind the crude general participation figures (Dwyer, 1994). The qualitative approach of the research in this thesis deals with the issue of regional variations in levels of retention in an in-depth and detailed way. It builds upon work conducted in several studies using quantitative and qualitative methods that examined the circumstances of rural students within the highly rural state of Tasmania (e.g. Abbott-Chapman, et

al., 1991, 1992; Choate, et al., 1992; Wieranga, 1999, 2001; Abbott-Chapman & Kilpatrick, 2001; Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman, 2002; Kilpatrick, Abbott-Chapman & Baynes, 2002; Baynes, Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman, 2002). Much of this research sought to identify factors that might improve educational participation.

Findings from previous research regarding the influences on rural and urban students' higher education choices have been described as "complex and not clearcut" and aspirations for higher education are shown to be influenced by

a subtle web of interwoven characteristics... including social background, financial resources, where people live and the collective values of the local community culture. The precise composition of that web, and the relative strength of its many strands, are both localised and highly personal (James, et al., 1999, p.ii).

In response to these earlier findings, this thesis examines that web of characteristics in greater depth in order to distinguish the various interwoven strands in finer detail than has been possible in many earlier studies. The focus on the particular circumstances of a cohort of rural high school students during their participation in the initial years of PCET and the more intensive nature of the investigation of their transitions from high school provides a greater level of detail about those transitions which have been recognised in previous research findings as qualitatively different from those of urban youth (Looker & Dwyer, 1998). In adopting this particular focus this thesis pays special attention to the social networks of the students and the related provision of family and community support.

International and national studies to be reviewed in this chapter highlight the impact of students' social networks on their PCET attitudes, aspirations and participation levels. The literature also indicates a need for research that considers the relative and compensatory contributions of individual, family and social factors, in terms of identifying the causes of school dropout and developing preventative efforts to keep students in school (Hymel, Comfort, Schonert-Reichl & McDougall, 1996). This research explores the influence from all three of these avenues, examining closely the students, families, schools and communities in specific rural localities where lower rates of participation occur to establish exactly how family, school and community encouragement and support there is influencing students. Improving knowledge about family, school and community encouragement may be one of the ways

remaining to influence participation rates - possibly one that has not been fully utilised - and may enable the boosting of encouraging factors that James and colleagues (1999) suggested as likely to be more critical in achieving long term gains in PCET participation.

The research in this thesis responds to three gaps identified in the literature reviewed in this chapter. First there is the need for more qualitative research, which will complement the extensive large-scale quantitative research, and will deal with regional and school-related variations in levels of retention in a detailed and in-depth way. Closely allied to this is the requirement for research which will focus on the specific localities where lower rates of PCET participation are observed. The third gap identified in the literature is a lack of research which considers the relative and compensatory contributions of individual, family and social factors in explaining school dropout.

Given the change to a more widespread commitment to participation in PCET, referred to at the beginning of this Chapter, and in light of the widely-recognised benefits both for individual students and nationally of completing post-Year 12 education and training, it is appropriate for there to be research concern about those who are not participating at this level and for effort to be expended on developing strategies to increase the participation rate of these particular students.

Rural students' participation in post-compulsory education and training

As the brief review in the previous section has illustrated, many different aspects of overall and rural PCET participation have been examined and much has been learned about students' perceptions of, and attitudes toward the various forms of PCET. Students' aspirations for PCET have been placed under the microscope and there has also been close examination of the factors that influence students' perceptions, attitudes, aspirations and the decisions they make regarding PCET.

Findings from this previous research and other studies mentioned in Chapter 1 have considerably increased our knowledge and understanding of overall PCET participation and have informed measures that have contributed to the achievement of substantial gains in overall rates of Year 12 participation. During the 1980s and

early 1990s the rate of non-completion of school for males dropped from 69% to 43% and the rate for females reduced from 58% to 25% (Lamb, et al., 2000).

However, the literature suggests that a full understanding of the situation of rural students still evades us and the gap between rural and urban students' participation identified in the 1990s has continued. The literature shows, in particular:

- Being from a non-metropolitan location has a negative influence on both intentions and participation (Khoo & Ainley, 2005);
- Regional, rural and remote students who commenced Year 11 were 1.7 times more likely than urban students to leave before completing Year 12 (McMillan & Marks, 2003);
- Rural Year 12 participation rates are approximately 10% below urban participation rates (Marks, et al., 2000);
- Rural students are an increasing proportion of the total number of students not completing Year 12 (Lamb, et al., 2000);
- Compared with metropolitan Year 12 students, regional Year 12 students were 1.4 times less likely to progress to higher education in the immediate post-school years, and rural/remote Year 12 students were 1.6 times less likely to progress (McMillan & Marks, 2003);
- Rural students are under-represented in the university student population (James, et al., 1999); and
- Urban/rural differences in participation have remained relatively unchanged since the 1990s (Fullerton, et al., 2003).

The maintenance of the level of overall participation during the 2000s referred to earlier is encouraging of efforts to achieve further improvement. Whether further improvement is possible and if it is, how it may be achieved are important questions for this and other research.

Around the time this research commenced participation in PCET had become the socially-accepted norm for most students in European Union States (Green, Hodson, Sakamoto & Spoor, 1999) and there was less research concern there about participation rates. However, other parts of the world, like Australia, retained some research focus on regional variations in participation. Studies in Britain noted marked variations among regions in participation and sought the reasons for this. The highest rates of staying on were in Greater London, followed by the south east, with the lowest rate in the north (Payne, 1995). Concern was also being expressed about “uneven distribution of deficits in educational attainment in southern regions of the United States of America... of the ten states with the lowest high school graduation rates, six are in the south” (Smith, Beaulieu & Israel, 1992, p.79). The authors also noted that educational attainment is lower in non-metropolitan than metropolitan areas. Similarly, American rural students were found to have the lowest likelihood of attending college - 45% compared to 67% for suburban students and 62% for urban students – and also are least likely to report that either of their parents expect them to attend college (63% reported this compared with 81% and 80% respectively of suburban and urban students) (Smith, Beaulieu & Seraphine, 1995). Although subsequently rates of high school graduation are on the rise, in some rural areas in the Appalachian region, for instance, students may still see completion of high school as an accomplishment and give little thought to college enrolment (Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004). The authors reported that males chose not to attend college because they thought it was not important or they wanted to remain in their home community whilst females’ reasons revolved around their perceptions of a lack of ability and financial barriers (2004, p.12).

As already indicated, much previous research has been from an equity perspective. The aims of such research have been to find reasons for the under-representation of particular groups of students in PCET and to improve their access to such education and training. Exemplary as such studies have been the approach has tended toward a deficit model view of students in these groups, including rural students, perceiving them in terms of their lack of access to or participation in PCET (e.g. Department of Education, Training & Youth Affairs [DETYA], 1999). This focus on the difficulties students have to face in order to participate at this level has had many advantages, as briefly documented in Chapter 1; however, it has also had an unintended side-effect.

It has diverted research attention away from fully recognising the different context of rural students and from addressing the issues raised by that different context.

The paucity of detailed information about the transition process in rural areas of Canada has been noted (Looker, 1993) but there is a recognition that transition patterns of rural youth are qualitatively different from those of urban or suburban youth. Differences in the decision processes and the costs associated with those decisions for Canadian and Australian rural youth have been identified (Looker & Dwyer, 1998).

Large-scale research in Australia that has a specific focus on rural students' PCET participation is not voluminous, although rural students are often included in studies of overall participation. However it is usually impossible and frequently difficult to separate findings concerning rural students from those concerning students generally. Findings from the relatively small number of studies that focus on rural students indicate differences in their attitudes toward school, particularly in the importance attached to completing school (i.e. Year 12) and the reasons for staying on at school (completing Year 12). Rural students were found to be more likely to see a university degree as less relevant to their future, less likely to believe that a university degree would lead to an interesting career and less likely to experience the positive effects of parental encouragement (James, et al., 1999). Many rural students have been shown to place a high priority on gaining a secure income, in contrast to other students intending to go to university who were more likely to take a longer term view and to value education for its own sake (James, et al., 1999). Large urban-rural contrasts have been reported in students' intentions and their reactions to the possibility of going to university (James, 2000).

A range of factors discourage rural students from PCET participation. Golding and Pattison (2004) have noted marked inequities in access to TAFE with students in the Northern Territory, Tasmania and Queensland having less access. The existence of TAFE extended campus networks and outreach facilities is recognised but a complete choice of TAFE programmes and levels is still seldom available beyond the main campuses, thus restricting participation of rural students. Although rural and regional schools are becoming increasingly involved in VET, specific barriers to success exist in rural and regional areas (Stokes, et al., 2006).

The economies of scale work against them, as they still need to cover the full range of leadership and specialist tasks but with a smaller staff size. ... Transport time and costs can be significant to students accessing VET courses, training blocks or structured work placements not based in the local community. Local employment options may also be limited in small towns or when regional towns are dominated by a single industry. While this problem also applies in urban areas, problems with organisational cross-sectoral differences between rural and regional schools and VET providers can have a negative effect, as they may be limited in VET provider options (Stokes et al., 2006, p.9).

The distance of higher education institutions from home and the cost of accommodation were found to be major concerns for rural students (Harvey-Beavis & Robinson, 2000) and rural students are more likely to be worried by the overall cost of university (James, et al., 1999). Parker and colleagues (1993) found that students outside the Sydney metropolitan area applied for university places and received offers at a similar rate to metropolitan students but were then more likely to defer or take no action on their offer, highlighting problems of travel, accommodation and finance. Similar evidence has been found of young people holding ambitions to attend university but nevertheless being hindered by a financial obstacle (James, 2000). Alston and Kent (2003) argue that the financial cost of higher education is creating a huge barrier for many rural families and that lack of access to higher education is a critical factor in the increasing social exclusion of many rural young people.

Of course beginning a post-Year 12 course of study is just that - the beginning - and some students face greater challenges in continuing with their chosen course. Many students not prevented initially by financial constraints are confronted with them subsequently. One of the main difficulties reported by rural and isolated students during their first year of university study was paying for course fees or other study-related expenses (Hillman, 2005). Athanasou (2001) found fewer students from rural regions completed a degree than urban students (9.2% compared with 11.3%).

Having to move away from family, friends and the district to pursue education and training beyond high school is another issue for rural students (Harvey-Beavis & Robinson, 2000). Stokes and Tyler (2002) found students returning to a rural area after discontinuing university study had concerns about moving to an unfamiliar place, the lack of support, lack of knowledge of potentially helpful services,

homesickness and lack of a sense of belonging. Rural students are cutting themselves off from the social support networks that assist with the “multiple transitions to adulthood” (Looker & Dwyer, 1998) adding a social cost to the financial costs involved. The authors note that proximity is important for the maintenance of social networks so a decision to leave home and community creates a potential strain on these networks.

James and colleagues (1999) assert that post-secondary education is neither equally attainable for all Australians nor seen as equally relevant by them, maintaining that the explicit barrier or disincentive created by the cost of attending university is not the only nor the major influence on students’ attitudes, and that present imbalances in higher education participation in Australia also reflect differences in family and community attitudes towards the relevance of education. This view is echoed by other researchers who suggest that much of the difference in urban/rural participation appears to be associated with the way regional communities relate to the education system (Stevenson, et al., 2001, p.17).

Despite the widespread valuing of, and commitment to staying on and completing Year 12 referred to at the beginning of this chapter, completing school and going on to university was not, by the late 1990s, seen as the norm in some rural families (James, et al., 1999). A question that arises is whether or not this situation remains. The answer has implications for achieving further change in rural PCET participation rates. If the situation remains it is possibly the explanation for the flattening out in PCET participation rates and efforts to improve these rates will likely be fruitless. However, if there has been a shift toward more positive attitudes then further improvement in rural PCET participation rates may be possible.

Influences on post-compulsory education and training participation linked to rurality

The literature has revealed many influences on the pattern of PCET participation besides rural or regional residence. These include individual factors such as student racial and socio-economic background, gender, school achievement in the compulsory years, school type and broader factors such as the state of the economy and the availability of work for young people. Some of these factors, such as socio-economic background and local labour market conditions, combine with rural

residence and heighten the disadvantage faced by students, therefore they are discussed here.

Socio-economic background is a well-documented influence on PCET (DETYA, 1999; Marks, et al., 2000; Fullerton, et al., 2003) and operates to lower participation in a range of different ways. Socio-economic background has a strong effect on the extent to which young people are able to successfully implement their post-school plans, especially if their plan is to attend university (Beavis, et al., 2004). Overtly, relative poverty has been found to be a direct barrier to higher education access and participation (Lynch & Riordan, 1998) and students have been noted to suffer financial hardship during university participation (Abbott-Chapman, 1998).

In Britain there is a continuing research interest in widening higher education participation, stimulated by the Higher Education Act 2004 and associated government policies that aim to improve the participation of under-represented or 'non-traditional' groups, such as students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as well as increasing overall numbers participating in higher education (e.g. Kettley, 2007; Thompson, 2008). A variety of different approaches to increasing participation have been taken. The impact on participation rates of financial changes in the funding of higher education particularly for students from lower socio-economic groups is argued to be limited without attention to others aspects (Bowers-Brown, 2006). The author asserts the importance of family support, understanding the advantages of higher education and increasing expectations and refers to the lack of confidence of students from non-traditional backgrounds. Although there are acknowledged difficulties in identifying appropriate participants for new initiatives covering all types of under-represented groups, some success is evident. For example, the Aimhigher intervention programmes that have targeted students with the potential to benefit from higher education but no parental background in higher education have been successful in the south west of England (Hatt, Baxter & Tate, 2005). Some higher education institutions have developed an explicitly regional focus with emphasis on community aspirations and aims to open up higher education opportunities to sections of those communities for whom higher education has not been a cultural norm (Hall & Thomas, 2005). Use of different strategies on different fronts to suit a range of circumstances is clearly required to achieve more representative PCET participation. Teachers and schools may play a leadership role

in promoting such programmes to potential participants. Their ability to do so will depend upon a solid understanding of the issues facing rural students and families.

Socio-economic background also operates in more subtle ways to depress participation of those on low incomes, including those from rural areas. Heightened awareness of the costs associated with PCET has already been raised as an issue for rural students and if those students are also from low income backgrounds it can only add to their sensitivity. Although the requirement to pay for part of the cost of university study through the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) was not given by students as a main reason for failing to participate in higher education (Andrews, 1999) this is perhaps not surprising. It is highly unlikely that many students would be willing to admit that personal financial difficulties were the main reason precluding their participation in higher education. Andrews (1999) did however note that some potential low socio-economic background students may be averse to accruing debt and therefore abandoned their plans to participate in higher education. Related to this is the perceived riskiness of participation in higher education. British working-class higher education non-participants' views of the value and benefits of higher education were found to be largely in tune with official discourses but they also saw higher education as inherently risky, demanding great investment and costs and yielding uncertain returns (Archer & Hutchings, 2000).

The low participation by low socio-economic background groups in higher education is believed to be primarily related to their values and attitudes toward higher education (Andrews, 1999). Mention has already been made of the different attitudes toward school and completing school held by rural as compared with urban students. In many ways the views of low socio-economic background students and rural students appear similar, probably because many rural students are from low socio-economic backgrounds. Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds have been found to be more concerned with job security and less with the inherent interest of further learning (James, 1999). Some students are attracted by the immediate 'returns' offered by employment (James, 2000) and in poorer communities and those where unemployment is high, the demand for work is likely to be stronger rather than weaker, especially if there has been a long cultural acceptance of early entry into the workforce (Teese, 2004). This would be the case in many rural areas of Tasmania.

In Australia, family socio-economic background, the community context in which people live and the physical distance from a university campus have been suggested as combining to result in educational advantage and disadvantage (James, et al., 1999). Students who are from a low socio-economic background and live in a rural area often must overcome both financial difficulties and face social and cultural challenges in gaining access to and in integrating into tertiary education (Hillman, 2005). As indicated in Chapter 2 many Tasmanian rural young people are from low socio-economic backgrounds thus they are likely to confront these dual barriers. There has been discussion in the literature of the cumulative nature of disadvantage faced by students who belong to more than one disadvantaged group (Andrews, 1999) and rural disadvantage in particular has been seen as multiplying with other forms of disadvantage rather than merely adding to them (Golding & Volkoff, 1999).

Availability of full-time employment opportunities has a significant bearing on overall PCET (Roussel & Murphy, 2000). Local labour market conditions, especially the availability of work for young people in rural areas, can also impact on PCET participation. The discussion in Chapter 2 has outlined the parlous nature of employment in rural areas of Tasmania, especially that for young people. Kilpatrick and Abbott-Chapman (2002) have suggested that rural economic downturn and associated factors were important in explaining participation differences in rural areas of Tasmania. Nationally, Wooden (1999) has suggested that the expectations of young people may be conditioned by persistently high levels of unemployment and that this can lead many of them to recognise the need for higher levels of educational attainment whilst concurrently being prepared to accept any job they can find. Parental anxiety about the future of the local community and viewing education as important insurance against future difficulties has been suggested to influence the decision to stay on at school by students from low socio-economic backgrounds and rural and regional areas in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia (James, 2000).

The preceding discussion suggests that there are many links between PCET participation patterns and family and community factors. An examination of these factors follows in the next two sections of the chapter.

Family factors influencing overall post-compulsory education and training participation

Family influence on PCET participation has been noted in the international literature. “For the majority of students intending to continue to higher education, their “natural” dispositions toward post-secondary education were clearly perceived to originate within the family domain” (Andres Bellamy, 1993, p.145). Wentzel (1996) concurs arguing that the socialisation literature suggests that children adopt goals that are valued by individuals with whom they have warm and supportive relationships, so family goals are a key to understanding children’s goals. Dweck (1996) believes that the goals students pursue are affected by their values, their implicit theories and their efficacy beliefs – all of which are formed in the family. British research has found family social and cultural barriers to be of great significance to higher education participation. Irish working-class students believed their social and cultural background was not valued in schools and sensed that higher education was remote and alien from their lives or was beyond their reach, often because they lacked confidence in their own abilities (Lynch & O’Riordan, 1998). Gorard and colleagues (1999) found that although expectations and opportunities for formal education and training in South Wales had increased, take-up of those increased opportunities varied, and differences were believed to be attributable to highly complex family influences.

Australian research has shown family background is an influence on young people’s education and training attitudes and aspirations (Wooden, 1999). Rates of early school leaving (i.e. before completion of Year 12) have been found to be strongly related to family educational and cultural resources. Students in families where either parent has a professional occupation and where the parents are university-educated and likely to have greater knowledge of the school system and have higher education aspirations for their children, far less often experience early school leaving (Ainley, et al., 1997). Abbott-Chapman and colleagues (1997) have shown that family socio-economic status and related educational aspirations were the best predictors of post-school destinations in terms of study, work or unemployment one year after leaving school.

Students themselves have identified parents as one of the most important influences on their attitudes to school completion, post-school study plans and the transition

from school to work (Harvey-Beavis & Robinson, 2000). Parents, especially mothers were considered the most important source of advice to students in assisting them to plan for their future (James, 2000). A somewhat different student view of parents has also emerged. Although confirming the central role of parents on their children's career choices, Pascoe (1996) found that few of the urban and rural student participants in his research felt their parents could offer valuable advice and guidance and did not have a good idea of current difficulties and complexities in finding a job or career. Many stated that their parents were role models to be avoided.

Parental aspirations for the students have been identified as a strong influence on participation in Year 12 (Marks, et al., 2000). The way in which parents convey positive values to their children about education, time spent helping with children's school work, role modelling and other attitudinal and behavioural patterns that are likely to improve student learning and interest in continuing with education have been found to have a stronger relationship with educational participation than wealth (Marks, et al., 2000). Kilpatrick and Abbott-Chapman (2002) suggest that family values surrounding education are involved in explaining participation differences in Tasmania.

The role of other family members has also been highlighted, with older siblings shown to have both direct and indirect impact. The advice of siblings was found to have some input in assisting students with career and future planning, but was not seen as important as that of parents (James, 2000), though others refer to the respect that students have for siblings' more recent experience (Pascoe, 1996). The educational and employment experiences of older siblings were noted as an influence on parental advice that may lead parents to encourage or discourage their younger children from further study (Abbott-Chapman & Baynes, 2002). Other relatives have been found to have assisted students by creating opportunities for interviews and offering direct advice where their own experience is relevant (Pascoe, 1996).

The research findings discussed above show that families may have a considerable influence on students' attitudes toward and aspirations for PCET. Given the potential of this family impact an investigation of the specific nature of family influences on rural students is warranted.

School and community factors influencing overall post-compulsory education and training participation

Although school factors influencing PCET participation have been investigated in previous research, much of this has concerned the role of schools from the institutional perspective. In this research the role of schools and colleges as factors influencing PCET participation will be identified from the perspective of student and non-student participants, therefore this strand of earlier research receives less attention in this review. While school-focused rather than student-focused research has led to development of theoretical constructs to explain British PCET destinations in terms of institutional and individual demographics, including college ethos (Hemsley-Brown, 1999), in Tasmania there is little scope for a PCET transition direct from Year 10 to TAFE, thus limiting the types of college destination and the relevance of the findings of such research and the applicability of those theoretical constructs for the Tasmanian context.

Research in the mid-1990s showed a range of student perceptions of teachers' that had potential to influence their PCET participation. Students' attitudes to school, education, their valuing of PCET and their perceived access to career advice and guidance were affected by these perceptions. A range of views was reported. Some students were critical of teachers' capacity to motivate and encourage the sustained interest of certain groups of students, their lack of experience of the world outside school, the lack of time to give individual attention and, for some students, an overabundance of career information (NBEET, 1995). Some young people reported that teachers were "usually only doing what they have to" and offered only average influential reference points and weak to non-existent role models; others saw some teachers as better at inspiring enthusiasm and interest amongst their students and their advice was trusted to a greater degree; and many were satisfied with school-based career services (Pascoe, 1996, p.28-29).

Later research indicated students' perceptions of teachers were more positive and showed the advice of teachers and careers advisers was considered to be more important than that offered by friends and other family members (other than parents) (James, 2000). Teachers were identified by students as one of the two most important sources of influence on their attitudes to school completion, post-school study plans and the transition from school to work (Harvey-Beavis & Robinson,

2000). Different, more adult and respectful relationships with teachers in VET programmes influenced rural and regional students from Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria to continue with education and training and provided clear direction on employment and career options (Stokes, et al., 2006). Students intending university study were more likely to be influenced by teachers' views than other students (James, 2000) and more reliance was placed on the advice of teachers by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds than those from higher socio-economic backgrounds (James, 2002). This illustrates the leading role taken by teachers and schools in provision of career/future guidance and advice and their positive impact on participation rates; a role that may be further enhanced by more specific preparation of teachers for teaching in rural schools. Recent research has sought to increase our understanding of how good rural teachers develop (The Bush Tracks Research Collective, 2006) and made suggestions for improving teacher preparation for rural practice (Boylan, 2005).

The potential of home-school partnerships as positive influences on student identity has been recognised in the literature, and wider use of these partnerships suggested.

Given that the bonding of school and community may have beneficial effects for the individual's affiliative needs and sense of personal identity it would seem desirable that the notion of school-community partnership become fully embedded in the culture of schooling (Crowther & Wilkes, 1995, p.74).

Research shows that relationships students have with others in the community including teachers, peers and employers "profoundly influence their trajectories and pathways, including their desire to stay in school, to seek employment and the thirst for learning" (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2002, p.10). Students' attachment to faculty (school and college teachers) and Year 6 (college) peers have also been suggested as important factors in explaining retention (Tinto, 1993). The broad range of other people who influence students' educational intentions and perceptions is recognised. "Significant others may be... friends, other students, teachers and careers counsellors in schools and in post-school institutions, who are sources of both information and of advice for students (Harvey-Beavis & Robinson, 2000).

Those outside the school environment also featured as providers of PCET information and advice or opinion. Students considered people with first-hand

experience of a course or job valuable because they knew “what it’s really like,” those who provided work experience placements were giving students the basis for a “hands on” evaluation of a possible career and all the people students come into contact with during that placement played a role as sources of information, advice and opinion (ANOP, 1993). The importance of ‘word of mouth’ and the ‘informal grapevine’ in finding out about tertiary education has been noted in studies with rural participants (Cummins, 1993; Abbott-Chapman, 1998, 2002).

Peers or friends can have a powerful influence, both positive and negative, on students’ attitudes toward school and academic achievement (Berndt & Keefe, 1996). These authors suggest that adolescents are not as lacking in independence as sometimes suggested but they do seek friends’ approval and need to identify with friends (1996). Others assert that students’ relations with their peers are an often overlooked sphere of influence on students’ education goals, playing second fiddle to students’ relations with their parents and teachers (Hymel, et al., 1996). These authors believe that feelings of relatedness with peers may be particularly important during adolescence and that peers may play a critical role in encouraging students to stay in or drop out of school.

Friends have been shown to be important in the process of

making choices, reviewing options and coping with the emotional strain of having to decide... are general confidants, who can provide a ‘sounding board’ for exploring half-formed ideas and feelings... who are regarded as offering the most sincere opinions because they have no interest in being less than honest... for the great majority of young people it is their friends who they believe know them best (Pascoe, 1996, p.29).

The above discussion has illustrated that family and community factors can be an extensive and profound influence on students’ PCET participation, therefore these factors are deserving of more intensive scrutiny. The discussion focused on family and community influences on students’ participation in terms of individuals in students’ families and communities; however, research has highlighted another type of influence that is exerted by the nature of the community in which students are living when that community is considered as a whole.

Impact of social support networks on overall student attitudes toward and participation in post-compulsory education and training

Research findings have shown that social networks can be beneficial for students both generally and in very specific ways. In a general sense the people in students' social networks can be part of a support system that can be of considerable importance to their well-being (Frydenberg, 1997) and a range of significant interpersonal relationships can have an impact on the individual's functioning (Caplan, 1974). Social support has been found to be beneficial as a source of acceptance, for providing useful information and guidance and also in the form of services and resource assistance (Greenglass, 1993). Social networks may be sources of important information that students need and have not obtained from their family or the school for a variety of reasons. This may include detailed information about how to be successful in continuing with PCET. Students such as those from families where there is no experience of such education or training and those who were reluctant to use, or less inclined to use school sources may be reliant on sources outside the family and school. As knowledge of appropriate strategies for pursuing or coordinating a goal, (such as continuing with PCET) is essential in order to effectively pursue that goal (Dweck, 1996), social networks for some students may be the difference between continuing or discontinuing with education and training. Finally, the value of social networks for providing a broader perspective and different points of view (Frydenberg, 1997) may assist rural students to consider and evaluate a wider range of career and future options than they would without those networks. Social networks of value to young people's development have been examined using the concept of social capital (Coleman, 1988) and further discussion of his research appears later in this Chapter. Pinkerton and Dolan (2007) argue that in order for young people to achieve their rights, have their needs met, and realise their potential, they require the support of immediate family and they describe family support as dependent on a nested set of social supports.

Family rests on the support of extended family, which in turn draws on a wider informal network of friends, neighbours and community. These various sources of informal support need to be able to access a wide range of formal institutions within the statutory, community, voluntary and private sectors (Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007, p.221).

Students' social networks are potential sources of assistance when they are faced with problems, new situations and changed circumstances and can be a buffer in the face of challenge (Zubrick, Silburn & Prior, 2005). How young people perceive the transition from Year 10 to PCET and how they react to the challenges that transition brings can also be conceptualised as how they cope with that transition. Coping has been described in the psychological literature as "made up of the responses (thoughts, feelings and actions) that an individual uses to deal with problematic situations" (Frydenberg, 1997, p.25). The ability to effectively cope with a situation is related to a combination of individual disposition (high self-esteem and an internal locus of control and autonomy), supportive family circumstances (warmth, cohesiveness, closeness, order, organisation) and support in the environment from an individual or group providing positive models for identification (Frydenberg, 1997). Howard and Johnson (2001) describe the key social, environmental and personal factors marking the difference between South Australian adolescents who coped or did not cope with a range of difficult life circumstances, as a sense of autonomy or personal agency, connectedness to others, success through accomplishments and a positive orientation to the future.

Related to the notion of coping is the term resilience which has been used to describe the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaption despite challenging or threatening circumstances (Howard & Johnson, 2000). The transition of most students from attending Year 10 in a rural high school to studying at a senior secondary college in an urban centre would be an example of challenging rather than threatening circumstances. The increasing necessity for young people to have skills and capacities to manage uncertainty and complexity (Wyn, 2007) requires a certain level of wellbeing or access to resources, material and cultural, that sustain life at a high level of satisfaction (Levin & Browner, 2005, in Wyn, 2007, p.36). Young people are reported as thinking that wellbeing and resilience were promoted by peer connectedness, family connectedness and school connectedness (Fuller, McGraw & Goodyear, 1999). Year 11 students in Victoria who participated in the research described this combination as having good friends, feeling that your family loves you and respects your decisions, and feeling that you fit in at school and have good teachers. (The discussion includes health and recreational as well as educational rights, needs and potential).

Two American studies have examined the resilience of students in relation to academic achievement. Findings suggested that students' academic success in Grade 12 is largely attributable to three protective mechanisms: a supportive, nurturing family and home environment; the students' interactions with and the involvement of committed, concerned educators and others in their lives; and the development of two key personality traits, perseverance and optimism (Floyd, 1996). Similarly Wasonga, Christman & Kilmer (2003) found resilience and academic achievement of Grade 9-12 students are partly products of a complicated interplay of family, school, peer and community influences.

It is apparent from the above discussion that coping ability and resilience, which may initially be conceptualised as personal characteristics or qualities, are much more closely linked to an individual's social networks, especially their families and others outside the family who are currently significant to them. A closer look at how students' social networks operate to encourage or discourage them from PCET participation shows considerable promise in increasing understanding of differences in patterns of participation.

Social support in rural communities

The closeness of rural communities may impact on school participation and achievement. Research in the United States of America refers to the advantage accruing to rural schools and their students through their close connection to the surrounding community and the intimacy of rural communities. "The characteristics of school-community connections believed to benefit rural students include parental participation in schools and student learning, the use of the community as a curricular resource and active and productive school-business relations" (Khattri, Riley & Kane, 1997, p.92). Similarly Australian research shows that rural school-community partnerships provide a range of positive outcomes for students, including community contribution to curriculum development, improvement of educational, training, social and leadership opportunities for rural youth, improved school retention, increased retention of youth in rural communities and cultural and recreational benefits from sharing school and community resources (Kilpatrick, Johns, Mulford, Falk & Prescott, 2002).

Looker and Dwyer (1998) have stated that the social characteristics of an area, in particular social networks are useful in understanding the differences between students' transitions in rural and urban areas. These authors describe the differences between rural social networks and urban social networks as follows:

- Rural social networks are distinguished by a concentration of connections internal to the community with fewer external connections, and more connections with the same people in different contexts.
- Rural communities are identified as separate and distinct.
- Access to resources such as private and public facilities is more restricted than that of urban areas, but access to resources such as space, isolation and possibly clean air and water is greater than for urban areas.
- Family and community identification with 'place' may be different in rural areas.
- People in rural areas are more likely to have close ties to the community and/or long-standing ties to the community.

Although this description confirms the close and intimate nature of networks in rural areas described by Khattri and colleagues (1997) it also highlights the preponderance of internal connections and may hint at a restricted range of people in those networks. Such rural networks may be very supportive of students in terms of nurturing their self-esteem and enhancing their personal wellbeing, as detailed in the discussion at the beginning of this section, but may be less supportive with regard to encouraging students to pursue PCET and employment opportunities outside the local community. The educational background of the people in students' networks and their attitudes toward and their valuing of education and training may become crucial in terms of their encouraging or discouraging students. Discussion of this is taken up later in the thesis.

Community attitudes toward education, especially PCET in rural areas have already been discussed, and the evidence suggests that such education and training is less

well-regarded there than in urban and suburban places. Community values toward education have been implicated in explanations of participation differences in Tasmania (Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman, 2002). Stevenson and colleagues (2001, p.1) asserted that overall perceptions of the value of university education need to change in non-metropolitan regions before participation rates could approach those of metropolitan regions. James and others (1999) have also noted the need to raise rural people's perceptions of the relevance and benefits of higher education. The social and economic environments in rural areas have been described as combining to "make higher education seem less attractive, less relevant and less attainable" (James, et al., 1999, p.94).

International and Australian literature already discussed has shown that students' relationships with others are an important resource for them during the time they are considering their PCET options and making decisions about their careers and futures. The individuals in students' families and social networks have been shown to be an important influence on the development of students' attitudes toward and participation in PCET (e.g. Andres Bellamy, 1993; Ainley, et al., 1997; Wooden, 1999; Harvey-Beavis & Robinson, 2000; Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2002) and the influence of both family members and others on students' aspirations has been demonstrated (e.g. Wentzel, 1996; Berndt & Keefe, 1996; Marks, et al., 2000). Studies have also highlighted the role of family members and other people known to students as providers of first-hand information about a PCET course or a job (ANOP, 1993), as sources of valuable advice and opinion about their choices (e.g. James, et al., 1999; James, 2000; Harvey-Beavis & Robinson, 2000) and as providers of experiences that enable evaluation of a possible career (ANOP, 1993). Students themselves mention people in their social networks who have provided connections to education, training and employment opportunities (Pascoe, 1996). As previously mentioned, social support plays an important part in young people's overall feeling of wellbeing, including their ability to achieve their goals and aspirations. Rural young people themselves have identified "good" or "supportive" relationships as key aspects of wellbeing (Bourke & Geldens, 2006).

Social relationships and trust of people in those networks are integral to the concept of social capital, as is the use individuals can make of the people in their relationships and networks. The following section of the chapter considers the

potential and value of the concept of social capital in describing the nature and characteristics of students' networks, variations in students' use of their social networks and variations in the amount, nature and quality of encouragement to continue with PCET provided by those networks.

The contribution of the concept of social capital to understanding of rural students' post-compulsory education and training participation

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the concept of social capital owes its origins to Hanifan (1916). Much later academic and research interest in the concept followed the work of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993). The contemporary concept of social capital remains a developing and evolving one, but has been used by a number of researchers and found to contribute to knowledge and understanding in several fields, including education. Further discussion of a number of these studies is taken up later, after the sections dealing with definitions and conceptual elements of social capital.

The concept of social capital with its central components of networks and norms including trust offers a means of examining differences in the characteristics and nature of students' relationships and networks, differences in students' trust of the people in their networks, whether that trust affects use of their networks, and differences in the availability of resources within students' networks that may assist or deter students making the transition to PCET outside the rural community.

What is social capital?

The rapidly growing social capital literature extends across many fields including anthropology, economics, education, politics, psychology and sociology, and this has resulted in a range of definitions of social capital. The definitions considered first in this review are those of two prominent sociologists, Bourdieu and Coleman, referred to earlier as being instrumental in renewing research interest in social capital. A sociological approach to the concept is most appropriate for this thesis examining as it does the social context in which students develop PCET aspirations, and the social factors that help shape students' motivation to continue with their education and training. Bourdieu's definition of social capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or

less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.248). Coleman discusses social capital in terms of what it does, “the function identified by the concept of social capital is the value of these aspects of social structure to actors as resources they can use to achieve their interests” (Coleman, 1988, p.S101). Winter (2000, p.29) in noting the overlapping nature of these two definitions, argues that Bourdieu and Coleman are referring to the same social processes, and that despite the differences in the purpose for which they use the concept, both Bourdieu and Coleman see social capital as an instrumental means of increasing an individual’s capital (Winter, 2000, p.25). Conceptual and cultural differences between Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam are also discussed by McGonigal, Doherty, Allan, Mills, Catts, Redford, McDonald, Mott and Buckley (2007) who conclude that despite these “a core understanding” emerges in the form of suggestions for “action that may be taken by governments or organisations to foster social capital with its norms and networks towards the strengthening of effective social and civic life” (2007, p.81). Education is suggested as a key site for such action. Stokes and colleagues (2006, p.12) refer to the differences in definition of social capital between two strands or theoretical positions in the literature which become important when measuring social capital.

...any measurement using the Bourdieu definition would have to include an understanding of the material conditions that drive the formation of social processes, whilst an analysis using the Coleman approach needs only to consider motivation at the individual (or aggregated individual) level. (Pope, 2003, p.2 cited in Stokes et al., 2006, p.12).

This debate is noted here; however it is outside the scope of this research as social capital is not being measured in this research.

The following themes have been identified as common to many sociological definitions of social capital and serve to facilitate understanding of the concept.

- Social networks and/or norms are key elements of social capital.
- Trust is either an additional element of social capital or a close proxy for the level of social capital present in a community.

- Social capital is a resource that people can use to achieve certain of their objectives.
- Social capital can arise at all levels of society – within families and other networks of familiars, within community-level networks and at the level of nation states.
- Social capital may also arise in relationships with formal institutions. (Productivity Commission, 2003, p.7-8).

Conceptual elements of social capital

Onyx and Bullen (2000) have identified and described a number of potential elements commonly portrayed in the literature as constituting social capital. These elements are networks of relationships, social norms, trust and reciprocity. Networks are described as the more or less dense, interlocking networks of relationships between individuals and groups, in which people engage with others through a variety of lateral associations that are voluntary and equal (Onyx & Bullen 2000, p.106). Networks have also been described as “the extent and nature of connections that criss-cross society” (Woolcock, 2000, p.17) and this illustrates both the marked variations in people’s tendency to associate with others and the different form of those associations. Fukuyama (1995) notes that for some people associations are primarily with family and kin, whilst others are drawn out of their families into associations or relationships with people in the wider community.

Relationships with family and people like oneself, such as friends, close work colleagues and neighbours are referred to as bonding social capital and those with unlike people, such as those from a different socio-economic background, a different age group or different ethnic group are referred to as bridging social capital, and relationships with people in positions of power are referred to as linking social capital (Woolcock, 2000). Bonding social capital is important for students’ wellbeing; however, that same bonding social capital among some families may also work against students’ desires to pursue education and training away from the rural area. For example where extended family are also resident in the same or a nearby community, or where family are long-term residents or where there is a family farm or business and the student is expected to continue the family tradition, or where

there are family employment connections and loyalties. By contrast, bridging and linking social capital may connect students to a broader range of people with further knowledge, information, advice and opinion about PCET opportunities.

The benefit accruing to individuals through their membership in networks depends on certain characteristics of those networks. The size of the network of connections that an individual can effectively mobilise in part dictates the volume of social capital to which an individual has access (Bourdieu, 1986, p.249). Another potentially beneficial aspect of the nature of relationships occurs when people are linked to others in more than one context, as is common in rural communities (Looker & Dwyer, 1998). This allows the resources of one relationship to be appropriated for another (Coleman, 1988, p.S109). For instance a student may gather information about education and training opportunities and possible careers from social relationships that are maintained for other purposes (e.g. pursuing sporting interests).

Social norms are described as “generally unwritten but commonly understood formulas for both determining what patterns of behaviour are expected in a given social context, and defining what forms of behaviour are valued or socially approved” (Onyx & Bullen, 2000, p.107). Woolcock describes norms as “the expected ways or patterns of behaviour that reside in a particular community” (2000, p.17). Social norms in rural communities can support and provide rewards, for instance, for high achievement in school, or alternatively can direct a young person away from education activities by rewarding sporting abilities and encouraging the following of sporting goals (Coleman, 1988, p.S104). Portes (1998) raises the potential negative effect of norms which enforce conformity and may limit the capacity of individuals and groups to move across social boundaries.

Membership in networks and the norms that guide their interactions in turn generate knowledge and trust which then facilitate reciprocity and cooperation (Kilpatrick, Field & Falk, 2003). A group has to adopt common norms as a whole before trust can become generalised among its members (Fukuyama, 1995, p.28). Trust is described as “a willingness to take risks in a social context based on a sense of confidence that others will respond as expected and will act in mutually supportive ways or at least that others do not intend harm” (Onyx & Bullen, 2000, p.107). Trust

is also referred to as a coping mechanism in a climate of risk and uncertainty enabling individuals to respond to risk and uncertainty in communities at a time of increasing sensitivity to the levels of risk and uncertainty faced (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2005). Trust is built up through interaction with people and is more common amongst people who have known each other for long periods (Stewart-Weeks & Richardson, 1998).

Hughes, Bellamy and Black (2000) distinguish between personal trust (trust of familiars) and social trust (trust of strangers) and outline several factors found to relate to levels of social trust. These are levels of education, values held by individuals, levels of vulnerability reflected by age, level of socio-economic disadvantage of the local area and the degree of social fragmentation (2000, p.237). Putnam also showed that “well-educated people are much more likely to be joiners and trusters” (1996, p.5). Personal trust is likely to exist among people in small groups (e.g. rural communities) but these people may not trust those in the wider society and those they do not know, and people whose lives are not fragmented and who know their neighbours have greater levels of trust in local people (Hughes, et al., 2000). Personal trust of those within the local community would enable rural students to freely seek career information and advice from within that community and be confident in the reliability of that advice. The extent of rural students’ social trust may determine their willingness to seek career information and advice outside the community. Nooteboom (2007) has noted a change in individual’s trust relationships from a small number of highly-personalised relationships in which people are involved with most of their personality to a larger number of relationships in which people are involved only with a limited part of their personality.

In developed industrial societies people are members of a greater diversity of groups, with limited involvement in each, and reliance is based to a much lesser extent on personal trust, and more on institutional conditions of laws and law enforcement, intermediaries of many kinds, and complex patterns of mutual dependence (Nooteboom, 2007, p.31).

Reciprocity occurs when an individual provides a service to others, or acts for the benefit of others at a personal cost but with the general expectation that this kindness will be returned at some undefined time in the future in case of need (Onyx & Bullen, 2000, p.106). “Reciprocity is likely to be associated with dense networks (or an individual’s strong ties) of social exchange. In communities where people can be

confident that trusting will be requited, not exploited, exchange is more likely to ensue” (Putnam, 1993, p.172). Where reciprocity is strong, people care for each other (Onyx & Bullen, 2000, p.106). This care can be seen in the level of interest people in a community take in the development of young people generally and in their educational achievement. Community interest can be demonstrated by provision of facilities and programmes for young people and by recognition of, and rewards offered, for their achievements.

The existence of negative consequences of social capital has been raised (e.g. Portes, 1998) and this ‘dark side’ of social capital (Ostrom, in Putzel, 1997, p.944) is now widely accepted as a reality. The negative consequences can be for society at large or for people within the network. Munn mentions as part of the dark side of social capital, the networks which reinforce resistance to schools, exemplified by truancing or violence towards pupils who comply with school norms or standards (2000, p.174). Field, Schuller and Baron (2000, p.245) highlight another part of the dark side of social capital - that it can underpin social hierarchies and create new sources of inequality. A less dramatic dark side is the strong sense of belonging characteristic of residents in rural communities and referred to by Stokes and Tyler (2002) as being missed by rural students relocating to an urban area. Nevertheless this can have negative consequences for students’ PCET aspirations and participation.

Family networks and information that are limited and concentrated in rural areas tend to be associated with a desire to find a job before completing school, preferably located near to home. Incomplete understanding and lack of trust of educational institutions and labour markets in urban centres based on local experience may be transmitted through advice of family and friends and influence young people toward current work rather than the long term goal of post-compulsory education (Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman, 2002, p.43).

Portes (1998, p.5) pointed out that Coleman’s work focused on close or dense ties between people but that weaker ties might prove more effective than dense ties in providing access to new knowledge and resources. Field and colleagues (2000) also note Coleman’s emphasis on primary connections such as kinship, at the expense of secondary connections such as social networks and civic engagement. Granovetter’s (1973) work on relations between social groups emphasised the role of weak ties

rather than strong ties in linking members of different groups. He used the example of individuals finding a new job through their contacts and showed that weak ties were “indispensable to individuals’ opportunities and to their integration into communities” (1973, p.1378). Frank stresses that social capital networks are dynamic and that “particular manifestations of social capital may be highly useful in achieving certain outcomes while of limited value or even counterproductive in achieving others” (2003, p.5). Both close ties with family and less close ties with others in a student’s social networks may be necessary to give many rural students contemplating continuing PCET outside their community access to all the social capital they need to achieve their PCET aspirations. This may apply particularly to those students who will be the first in their family to participate in education and training at this level - for instance because their parents did not participate at this level and/or there is no older sibling who has - and for those students whose parents were educated in a different education system, e.g. outside Tasmania/Australia.

As previously mentioned, researchers have used the concept of social capital in international research in family and community settings and have found it of value in explaining educational participation and achievement (e.g. Coleman, 1988; Marjoribanks, 1992; Smith, et al., 1995; Teachman, Paasch & Carver, 1997; Marjoribanks, 1998; Abbott-Chapman & Kilpatrick, 2001; Israel, Beaulieu & Hartless, 2001; Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman, 2002; Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003; Croll, 2004). Social capital has also been used to explore the nature of rural and urban social interactions (Hofferth & Iceland, 1998; Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Onyx & Bullen, 2000), to examine how networks develop and operate in rural and urban communities (Alston, 2002) and to investigate people’s capacity to engage in social networks (Onyx & Bullen, 2000).

Social capital and educational participation and achievement

Social capital was used in educational research by Coleman (1988) in the United States of America. He examined the importance of social capital within the family to children’s educational outcomes, measuring social capital through the strength of the relations between parents and children - specifically the physical presence of adults in the family and the attention given by adults to the child. Findings showed that social capital is crucial to the transfer of human capital from parents to children. “If the human capital possessed by parents is not complemented by the social capital

embodied in family relations, it is irrelevant to the child's educational growth that the parent has a great deal, or a small amount, of human capital" (Coleman, 1988, p.S110). The ratio of parents to children in the household and the mother's expectation that the child would go to college were associated with the likelihood of the child dropping out of high school (1988, p.S111). Both social capital in the family and social capital outside it, in the adult community surrounding the school, showed evidence of considerable value in reducing the probability of dropping out of high school.

Following Coleman's study a number of other researchers based in the United States of America examined the effect of a variety of measures of family and community social capital on post-compulsory retention. Most were extending the research of Coleman and therefore used similar measures for the concept of social capital. Israel and colleagues (2001) found that family social capital, indicated by parents providing a nurturing environment (e.g. helping children with homework, discussing school activities, having high educational aspirations for them) and providing guidance on behaviours that are deemed appropriate and inappropriate had powerful and positive effects on children's educational progress. These indicators were similar to those previously mentioned as being used by Marks and colleagues (2000) and found to be linked with educational participation. General measures of social capital (e.g. attending a Catholic school and family structure) and specific measures of social capital (parent-child interactions concerning school and parent-school interactions) were related to dropping out of school (Teachman, et al., 1997). The findings of Smith and colleagues (1995) indicated that where students' socio-demographic status works against higher educational attainment, integration into the community and support and encouragement for higher educational attainment from parents can make the difference between going to college or not and parental expectation of college attendance was the most powerful predictor of subsequent college attendance among variables examined.

A limitation of the studies discussed above was that the data used were not collected specifically for the research purpose, as was common practice in earlier social capital studies. Data already collected for a number of surveys including the National Educational Longitudinal Survey were used and measures of social capital were retrospectively constructed. The need to improve upon these measures was noted by

Teachman and colleagues (1997). Stone notes this limitation and also criticises many prior studies for their reliance on measures of the outcomes of social capital as indicators of social capital itself (2001, p.4-5). Considerable research effort since then has concentrated on developing improved instruments for measuring social capital (e.g. Stone, 2001; Narayan & Cassidy, 2001; Bullen & Onyx, 2005). A instrument for measuring social capital among rural youth has also been developed and used (Onyx, Wood, Bullen & Osburn, 2005). The need for continuation of social capital measurement research is recognised (Productivity Commission, 2003).

Other research has utilised the concept of social capital in investigating social relationships which influence education and the role of families in students' educational outcomes. Horvat and colleagues (2003) focused particularly on parent relationships with schools and organisations (e.g. health care and organised leisure activities such as sporting groups, Brownies and Scouts). Findings revealed many qualitative and quantitative differences between resources in families' networks largely attributable to social class differences, culminating in their view that "the efficacy of parental networks and parental school involvement should be viewed as conditional upon the presence of other forms of capital" (Horvat, et al., 2003, p.345.) Educational outcomes, including academic attainment in British public examinations at age 16, have been found to be affected by parents' behaviour, particularly direct parent mentoring (e.g. monitoring homework), general parent-child communication and parental involvement in wider social networks, as well as by the socio-economic status of the family (Croll, 2004).

A number of studies have investigated social capital in relation to family background and adolescents' aspirations. Marjoribanks (1998) showed that family background, childhood social and academic capital, and adolescents' social capital combine to have medium to large associations with adolescents' aspirations, and the associations were larger for educational aspirations than for occupational aspirations. Community social capital has been shown to be important to young people in "negotiating a way through the trials and errors of the (post-school) work/study mosaic" (Abbott-Chapman & Kilpatrick, 2001, p.35) and of value in explaining Tasmanian rural young people's work/study values and priorities with regard to post-school pathways.

Social capital in rural research

As mentioned earlier, social capital has been utilised in studies that examine the nature of social interactions. The tendency of rural families to exchange exclusively with kin has been noted in the United States of America (Hofferth & Iceland, 1998). The authors interpreted this as supporting the notion that family ties are stronger in rural areas where families are less mobile and are more strongly connected to their kin networks (1998, p.595). The research also indicated clearly that although rural families benefit from their strong ties of kinship, they may suffer from a lack of weak ties that create social capital and permit upward mobility (1998, p.596). Reference has already been made to research noting the dynamic nature of social capital (Frank, 2003) and thus a need for both kinds of ties. Negative impacts of social capital or the “dark side” of social capital have been noted earlier (e.g. Ostrom in Putzel, 1997, p.944; Putzel, 1997; Portes, 1998; Munn, 2000; Field, et al., 2000) and examples given. An individual’s or a family’s possession of strong family networks and bonding social capital and few other relationships, networks or bridging social capital may be seen as having a slightly different but similarly negative influence on a student’s links to PCET opportunities.

Research already cited that identified and described elements of social capital used the concept to investigate the nature of social relations and social networks in two rural, two outer metropolitan and one inner city community in New South Wales (Onyx & Bullen, 2000). The authors found the capacity to form connections was dependent on the individual’s “personal capacity for trust, tolerance of difference, value of life and social agency or proactivity” (2000, p.128). Responses to elements of social capital were generally higher in rural than urban areas, particularly in relation to participation in local community, trust and safety and neighbourhood connections, and people in rural areas were also likely to have a greater number of connections between arenas (family, neighbourhood and community organisations) than people in urban areas. Onyx and Bullen (2000) suggest this may be despite or because of the fact that there are fewer bridging links to different communities in these areas. However, a consequence of this dense interaction within a closed community is a tendency to create walls against outsiders. Onyx and Bullen (2000) argue that rural communities do have the capacity to generate social capital and this capital creates the capacity for social action to meet the common good within the particular arena as they define it. This may not be for the common good of everyone

in the local community, for instance may not be for the good of marginalised groups in that community, and may not be for the common good of the nation. This is part of the 'dark side' of social capital that was discussed earlier.

The above discussion of use of the concept of social capital by particular researchers in the education and rural sociology fields has demonstrated its relevance and usefulness in establishing and describing differences in the nature of students' relationships with others and the use they make of them. Coleman's development of the concept of social capital to explain the higher than expected attainment by poor children in Catholic schools has been recognised as helpful in understanding the under-achievement of poor children in schools and hence the continuing under-representation of people from poor backgrounds in higher education and 'white collar' jobs (Munn, 2000, p.172). Field and colleagues have echoed Coleman's assertions that social capital can make a valuable contribution to examination of issues of social equity and social justice (2000, p.245). Woolcock (2000, p.18) attests to the usefulness of the concept, despite the downsides of stifling dissent compromising an individual's autonomy and exerting normative pressures. He asserts that social capital does help to bring about other kinds of objectives, for example possessing social capital is associated with wellbeing. As discussed above a student's level of wellbeing is related to their ability to cope with change, such as that needed in order to participate in urban-based PCET.

Social capital in this thesis

Winter (2000) drew attention to the different purposes for which Bourdieu and Coleman used the concept of social capital. Bourdieu's interest was to understand how social capital worked to generate economic capital for individuals in various social settings, whereas Coleman was interested on how social capital worked in family and community settings to lead to more or less human capital for individuals (Winter, 2000, p.26). In this thesis the concept is being used for a purpose closely aligned with that of Coleman - though not unrelated to Bourdieu's purpose, as the link between economic capital and human capital in the form of educational qualifications is a strong one. For the purpose of this research the definition of social capital adopted is "the networks, norms and values in family, school and community that students can draw upon for information, advice, opinion and support for their PCET participation." This definition is closely related to those of Bourdieu and

Coleman discussed at the beginning of this section. This sociological definition is highly appropriate given that the thesis is an examination of both the social context in which the students develop their PCET aspirations and the social factors that play a part in shaping the students' commitment to their aspirations.

A central concern of this thesis is to examine and understand the role played by family and community factors in rural PCET participation. The three research questions to be addressed are listed in Chapter 1, and these questions concern:

- how social capital in family and community networks shapes students' PCET aspirations;

- how social capital in family and community networks encourages or discourages students' realisation of their PCET aspirations; and

- the usefulness of the concept of social capital in understanding rural students' PCET careers.

As briefly mentioned at the beginning of this section, the concept of social capital with its central components of networks and norms including trust, offers a means of examining differences in the characteristics and nature of students' relationships and networks, differences in students' trust of the people in their networks and whether that trust affects their use of their networks, and differences in the availability of resources within those networks that may assist or deter the students in making the transition to PCET. The concept of social capital may assist in understanding variations in the amount of encouragement to continue with education or training beyond Year 10 which rural students receive from their families and other people in their communities. The level of encouragement received may influence a student's decision to continue or discontinue with PCET.

This thesis draws on the findings from previous research using social capital in making an assessment of the extent of social capital available to the students from their parents, the school and others in the community. With regard to parents and family, questions asked students about

- the closeness of their relationships with parents/family (Coleman, 1988; Israel, et al., 2001);

their discussion with parents/family about their education and/or PCET participation (Smith, et al., 1995; Teachman, et al., 1997; Marjoribanks, 1998; Israel et al., 2001; Croll, 2004);

their perceptions of parental/family expectations that they will participate in PCET (Coleman, 1988; Smith, et al., 1995; Marjoribanks, 1998; Israel, et al., 2001);

their perception of parental/family views about (trust of) the school (Onyx & Bullen, 2000; Hughes, et al., 2000);

their perceptions of parental/family views about (trust of) the education system (Onyx & Bullen, 2000; Hughes, et al., 2000) and

the extent and nature of parental networks (Bourdieu, 1986; Horvat, et al., 2003).

The extent of social capital available to students from outside their families is also assessed via similar questions asked of students about

the closeness of their relations with others in the community (Smith, et al., 1995; Onyx & Bullen, 2000; Israel, et al., 2001);

their discussion with others about their PCET (Marjoribanks, 1998; Israel, et al., 2001);

their perceptions of others' expectation that they will participate in PCET (Israel, et al., 2001);

their perceptions of others' views about (trust of) the school (Onyx & Bullen, 2000; Hughes, et al., 2000);

their perceptions others' views about (trust of) the education system (Onyx & Bullen, 2000; Hughes, et al., 2000); and

the extent of community networks (Bourdieu, 1986).

Use of the concept of social capital has the advantage of facilitating the positive approach of this research, focusing as it does on the encouraging factors rather than on those that discourage or prevent students from PCET participation. The role of family and community factors that encourage and sustain rural students through the difficult years of study during Years 11 and 12 and the initial year of a post-Year 12 course can be analysed and the knowledge gained used to develop strategies to encourage more students. The particular value of social capital in generating fresh ways of addressing a host of issues and bringing together different political or disciplinary perspectives (Schuller, 2007) suggests the concept as highly appropriate

for the contrasting approach taken in this thesis. Use of the concept of social capital facilitates the examination of the positives of family, school and community encouragement and enables the educational, sociological and psychological perspectives to be merged thus increasing our understanding students' PCET experiences.

The social capital approach allows consideration of factors suggested to have often been neglected in models of educational participation or that are more malleable to government policy initiatives than some other factors used in models of educational participation (Marks, et al., 2000). Examples of such factors are parental expectations and students' aspirations. The use of the concept of social capital enables such factors to be taken into account and to be explored in depth.

Finally, the heuristic value of social capital (Schuller, Baron & Field, 2000) renders it a useful concept for exploratory research such as this, where the aim is to investigate the situation and circumstances in which rural students are making their PCET decisions. "One of the key merits of social capital is the way it *shifts the focus of analysis from the behaviour of individual agents to the pattern of relations between agents, social units and institutions*" (authors' italics) (Schuller, et al., 2000, p.35). This is of particular value in this thesis as it enables interpretation of the students' experiences of education and training after Year 10 that goes beyond the individual student. It means that the complex relationships that students have with their families and others in their communities and beyond, and the positive and negative aspects of those relationships can be taken into account.

Summary

In this chapter literature providing a background to PCET participation in Australia was reviewed. The considerable contribution made by previous researchers to understanding of the factors underlying patterns of participation was recognised. Subsequent sections considered the participation of rural students, family and community influences on overall participation, the impact of social support networks on overall student attitudes toward and participation in PCET and the contribution of social capital to the understanding of rural students' participation.

The review of the PCET participation literature shows a levelling in participation rates, indicates that participation rates are of continuing research concern and that further attention to improving participation rates is warranted. Some gaps are identified in our knowledge, in particular, our knowledge and understanding of the student perspective on rural transition issues.

Previous research has highlighted the need for especial attention to be placed on the impacts that family, school and community encouragement may have on rural students' PCET aspirations and participation. The review suggests that a closer examination of the circumstances and experiences of rural students would add to current knowledge, understanding and theory about these issues. Such close examination is most appropriately achieved by "qualitative and naturalistic approaches to inductively and holistically understand human experience and constructed meanings in context-specific settings (Patton, 2002, p.69).

This research aims to fill some of the gap referred to above by extending our understanding of the rural students perspective on transition to PCET, and to a lesser extent those of rural families and communities and thus contributing to fundamental knowledge and theory about rural PCET participation. An operational definition of social capital reflecting elements from Bourdieu and Coleman has been developed to aid in further understanding of rural students' relationships with others in their families and communities, of students' willingness to utilise and use of family and community resources in pursuing PCET aspirations and of how this impacts upon their transitions to initial senior secondary college-based PCET.

The following chapter contains a discussion of the methodology used in the conduct of this research to examine the experiences of a sample of rural Tasmanian students and shed light on the meaning of PCET participation for this particular group of students.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter the research approach is set out and explained. Initial decisions were about two inter-related aspects of the research. Firstly, those concerning the most appropriate means (methods and methodology) to be used to fulfil the purpose of the research (i.e. to more fully understand the role of family and community factors which encouraged Tasmanian rural students to persist with PCET). A second set of considerations were those regarding the philosophical assumptions or theoretical perspective and those relating to research background and personal experience.

Further explanation and justification for these decisions is given in the next sections of this chapter. This is followed by a discussion of the role of the researcher in the study and a brief, tabulated outline of the research sequence. The ethical issues involved in the research are discussed next, and then the steps in gaining access to research sites and participants are outlined. The data collection procedures employed are described in detail, followed by an account of the data analysis techniques. The use of member-checking and focus groups with participants to verify the accuracy of the findings from their perspective is described and finally the limitations of the study are raised.

Research approach

The research approach was based on decisions about the methods that would best enable the research questions to be answered and the research purpose to be fulfilled. As detailed in Chapter 1 the purpose of the research is to contribute to fundamental knowledge and theory regarding rural PCET participation from the student perspective. Specifically, the aim is to more fully understand the role of family and community factors in encouraging Tasmanian rural high school students to persist with PCET. It is a small-scale and qualitative study and focuses on the experiences of rural students when developing and realising their PCET aspirations. There is emphasis on the part played by the rural students' families, schools and communities during this time, and in particular the role of students' relationships and networks within their families, schools and communities in encouraging them to persist with PCET, often under trying circumstances. The concept of social capital is utilised to

examine the influence of families and other people in communities on the students' educational aspirations and achievements.

This is a phenomenon that has received little qualitative research scrutiny as is evidenced in the review of the PCET participation literature in Chapter 3. A greater understanding of the situation of rural students, in particular their transition process from high school into the initial years of PCET may influence education policy regarding PCET participation and also educational practice in schools and colleges.

“Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Creswell, 1998, p.15). The essential characteristics of qualitative research are “the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of fieldwork, an inductive orientation to analysis and findings that are richly descriptive” (Merriam, 1998, p11). “The strengths of qualitative research derive primarily from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers” (Maxwell, 1996, p.17).

There were many reasons why qualitative methods were the most appropriate and fruitful in achieving the research purpose. The exploratory nature of qualitative research is particularly appropriate when little is known about which factors might be important to examine (Creswell, 2005). Previous research had focused on other aspects of rural PCET participation (e.g. identifying the barriers and difficulties for rural students seeking to continue with their education or training after Year 10 (e.g. Parker, et al., 1993; Western, et al., 1998), and the factors involved in rural students' PCET choices (e.g. Hannan, et al., 1995; Harvey-Beavis & Robinson, 2000). Whilst encouragement and discouragement of students had been a topic of discussion in the literature (James, et al., 1999), no specific investigation of the family and rural community's role in encouraging rural students to continue had been undertaken. This research seeks to determine the role played by both the students' relationships with other people and to investigate the students' use of those personal networks in encouraging or discouraging them to continue with PCET and in explaining their ability to cope with difficulties facing them whilst participating in PCET. It is a

response to the research gaps identified in this Chapter 3 and may increase our understanding of the situation of these rural students, and in particular their transition process. This understanding may directly or indirectly result in an improvement in rural PCET participation rates.

Related to the exploratory nature of qualitative research is the emerging nature of qualitative research design (Creswell, 2003, p.181). This characteristic is valuable for this research because it allows for change during the research process. As the intention is to discover from the study participants what family and community factors are encouraging students to persist with PCET, the nature of these factors cannot be known initially and indeed may change during the conduct of the research. A further unknown is the way in which these factors will be influential. Therefore there is a distinct possibility that the research may proceed in a direction that was not anticipated at the start. The research design needs to be “sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry” and to remain “emergent even after data collection begins” (Patton, 2002, p.255).

Previous research investigating rural PCET participation has not included Tasmanian rural students in the sample (e.g. ANOP, 1994; James et al., 1999). Given the recognition that school students’ aspirations for PCET are influenced by “a subtle web of interwoven characteristics and that the precise composition of that web and the relative strengths of its many strands are both localised and highly personal” (James et al., 1999, p.ii) research attention to specific localities such as in this research may add to current knowledge and understanding. The fact that the Tasmanian education sector is structurally different from that found in most other parts of Australia (as outlined in Chapter 2) is an added impetus. Qualitative methods have been suggested as merited where the topic has never been addressed with a certain sample or group of people (Morse, 1991, in Creswell, 2003, p.22).

Qualitative research is especially suited to understanding the meaning, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, and actions they are involved with and of the accounts that they give of their lives and experiences (Maxwell, 1996, p.17). This is exactly what is required to deal with the data collected, that is the

students' accounts of their study experiences and decision making activities whilst at high school, senior secondary college and in the first post-Year 12 year.

Qualitative methods are also considered well-adapted for understanding the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions (Maxwell, 1996) and allow for focus on "actual practice in situ, looking at how social interactions are routinely enacted" (Silverman, 2003, p.359). In this research use of qualitative methods will facilitate the focus on how rural students actually make their decisions, with whom they interact and in what manner. The practice in qualitative research is to go into the natural setting (Creswell, 2003) and this was appropriate for the purpose of this research. Full understanding of what was encouraging the rural students would require compilation of a high level of detail about them, the places in which they lived and studied prior to Year 12, the places in which they subsequently studied, trained or worked, and their circumstances and situation during their transition from high school to post-Year 12 education or training.

The particular context within which the participants act needs to be adequately described. Qualitative methods allow the pinpointing of aspects of the experience of a sample of rural students that have been crucial in enabling them to go against the trends showing, firstly, that many students who attend rural schools until Year 10 do not complete Years 11 and 12 and secondly, that many who complete Years 11 and 12 do not enter post-Year 12 education and training. These methods facilitate an investigation of a combination of factors in the specific locations where lower rates of participation occur in order to improve our qualitative understanding of why rural students make the choices they do. Qualitative methods allow research participants and sites to be described in an in-depth and detailed way. This level of detail can be hidden behind the crude participation rates of larger scale studies (Dwyer, 1994), but it is important and highly specific information that will pinpoint and inform the kind of strategies that may herald an improvement in PCET participation.

A further reason that qualitative methods are suited to the research purpose is because of their particular strength in understanding the process by which phenomena take place, rather than outcomes or products of research (Maxwell, 1996; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Naturalistic inquiry, described by Patton (2002, p.42) as "a

dynamic, process orientation that documents actual operations and impacts of a process, program or intervention over a period of time” appeared to be an appropriate strategy to adopt for the research, because the intention was to describe and understand the situation of these rural students as they proceeded from Year 10 studies at their rural high school, through Year 11 and 12 studies at an urban senior secondary college, and on to some form of post-Year 12 education or training. There was no requirement for any kind of intervention, rather the key task was to observe and record the complexity of the process and use as data whatever emerged as important to understanding what the students were experiencing. This fitted very closely with naturalistic inquiry as outlined by Patton (2002).

Finally there are the benefits in developing theory via qualitative methods. Maxwell (1996, p.21) asserts that qualitative research has an advantage in generating results and theories that are understandable and experientially credible, both to the people being studied and others. Going into the field, as is the practice with qualitative methods, allows both a focus on the perspectives of the people involved in the phenomena or events under study (the rural students) and on gaining an understanding of the particular setting in which the phenomena or events take place (the rural areas, the urban senior secondary colleges and the situation and circumstances of the rural students). In turn this practice allows an understandable and credible theory to emerge.

The contribution to knowledge and theory regarding rural PCET participation of this qualitative research is its emphasis on the student perspective in “generating and confirming theory that emerges from close involvement and direct contact with the empirical world” (Patton, 2002, p.215). Qualitative and inductive methods “refine, extend, challenge or supercede extant concepts” (Charmaz, 2006, p.169) and develop theory that reflects the complexity of social life and is therefore limited in scope, rich in detail and bounded by context (Dey, 1999, p.39). It is substantive theory requiring a comparative analysis between or among groups within the same substantive area (Dey, 1999, p.40). The theory developed in this thesis focuses on understanding rather than explanation and prediction. This is consistent with one of two definitions of theory discussed in Charmaz (2006) whereby theoretical understanding is “abstract and interpretive; the very understanding gained from the theory rests on the theorist’s interpretation of the studied phenomenon” (Charmaz, 2006, p.126). The

inductive approach uses the theoretical perspective as a lens to shape what is looked at and the questions asked, as discussed by various researchers (e.g. Creswell (2003, p.119).

The literature review has been used to develop a strong theoretical sense of the research problem and assess the potential of the theoretical construct of social capital to further understanding of the development and realisation of rural young peoples' PCET aspirations and their initial PCET participation experiences. The review of the education participation literature identified a range of reasons why rural students are less likely to continue with PCET and suggested a need for research focusing on the particularly localised and highly personalised factors that influence students' PCET aspirations. The review of social capital literature suggested social capital theory was an appropriate lens to shape the inquiry.

A perceived weakness of qualitative research is the lack of generalisability of its conclusions. This is also referred to as external validity, and is a concern about whether the findings will be applicable to other subjects and settings. This lack of generalisability exists because the sample in some types of qualitative studies is small and either of uncertain representativeness or clearly unrepresentative (having been selected to illuminate a particular issue). However, "the validity, meaningfulness and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size" (Patton, 2002, p.245).

As is clearly apparent from the above discussion, this research is of the former type in that it examines a small number of individuals using purposive sampling. A "small nonrandom (sic) sample is selected precisely *because* the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many" (Merriam, 1998, p.208) (author's italics). "Attention is paid to particulars; and data is interpreted in regard to the particulars of a case rather than generalisations" (Creswell, 2003, p.199). The purpose of this research is inconsistent with any claims of wide generalisability and therefore none are made. It is neither possible nor the intention to generalise widely from the research findings. This position is not without precedent. "External generalizability is often not a crucial issue for qualitative studies" (Maxwell, 1996, p.97).

A characteristic of qualitative research seen by some as a weakness is that the researcher “filters the data through a personal lens that is situated in a specific socio-political and historical moment” (Creswell, 2003, p.182). “Given intense interaction of the researcher with persons in the field and elsewhere, given a constructivist orientation to knowledge, given the attention to participant intentionality and sense of self, however descriptive the report, the researcher ultimately comes to offer a personal view” (Stake, 1995, p.42). This personal interpretation is something that cannot be avoided but nevertheless needs to be recognised. “There are techniques that, while they fall short of *guaranteeing* balance and fairness, can nevertheless provide a system of useful checks and balances” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.108). Those used in this research are discussed later, (in the section, Verifying the accuracy of findings). The interpretation of the views of participants in this research is a personal one, and represents one interpretation of reality. This philosophical perspective is further explained in the following section.

Theoretical perspective and philosophical assumptions

Making decisions that result in a choice of research methods that will best suit the achievement of the research purpose might appear to be an obvious starting point. In reality, all the decisions are related and are considered simultaneously - though this might not be clear when the discussion in the thesis treats them sequentially, as it must for clarity. “Justification of our choice and particular use of methodology and methods is something that reaches into the assumptions about reality that we bring to our work... It also reaches into the understanding you and I have of what human knowledge is” (Crotty, 1998, p.2). The researcher’s philosophical ideas influence the practice of research and need to be identified (Creswell, 2003, p.4).

Reflection upon assumptions about reality led to an identification with the constructionist epistemological position that there is no objective truth or meaning to be discovered, but that meaning is constructed (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Heidegger, 1959, 1962). Constructionism, as defined by Crotty is the view “that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (1998, p.42). This viewpoint accepts that there can be a variety of different meanings given to the same phenomenon by different people, because they are individually constructing or

developing their meaning. A researcher can look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas... (and) rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2003, p.8).

The social constructionist view (Mannheim, 1949; Berger & Luckmann, 1967) has the additional aspect that there is an inevitable historical and socio-cultural dimension to our constructions of meaning as we develop them against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language, etc. (Schwandt, 2000, p.197). This social constructionist view is taken in this research. An understanding is sought of the situation of Tasmanian rural students making the transition to PCET away from their rural community, through visiting the rural communities in which they grew up and the senior secondary colleges they are attending, and gathering information personally. As has been alluded to above, an interpretation of data is made, that is coloured by personal experience and background (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

These views about the nature of knowledge are aligned with the interpretivist approach which "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 1998, p.67) in contrast with the positivist approach which seeks to discover natural laws so people can predict and control events (Neuman, 2003, p.91). In interpretive research

education is considered to be a process and school is a lived experience. Understanding the meaning of the process or experience constitutes the knowledge to be gained from an inductive, hypothesis- or theory-generating (rather than a deductive or testing) mode of inquiry (Merriam, 1998, p.4).

The knowledge expected to be gained from this research is an understanding of the meaning of the students' experiences in continuing with their education and training since leaving their rural high school.

Strategy of inquiry and methodology

Decisions about the strategy of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Creswell, 2003) or methodology (Crotty, 1998) to be used for the research were centred on choosing from among a wide variety of recognised and well-used types available, those that would best fulfil the research purpose (i.e. to more fully understand the role of family

and community factors that encourage Tasmanian rural students to persist with PCET). Elements from two particular strategies of inquiry, phenomenology and ethnography, were drawn upon in constructing the approach.

The procedures used in phenomenology informed the approach as the intention was to study a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological investigation has “research questions that explore the meaning of experience for individuals and asks individuals to describe their everyday lived experiences” (Creswell, 1998, p.54). Use of these procedures is appropriate because, in contrast with previous research, the focus is to be on the views of a sample of rural students themselves, rather than parents or professionals in the education system, such as teachers, Principals, or careers advisers. A phenomenological perspective, or a focus on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning, requires data to be collected via in-depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest or have “lived experience” (Patton, 2002, p.104) as opposed to those who have second-hand experience, such as parents, teachers, Tasmanian Department of Education personnel or government policy makers. This was clearly an appropriate strategy, as the aim was to obtain a picture of the experiences of a group of students as they made the transition from Year 10 in a rural high school through Years 11 and 12 at a senior secondary college in an urban centre some distance from home, and on to some form of post-Year 12 education and training. The outcome of the investigation would be a better understanding of the “essential, invariant structure or essence of the experience” (Creswell, 1998, p.55).

The other strategy of enquiry or methodology drawn upon in constructing the research approach, ethnography, is a form of qualitative research used by anthropologists to study human society and culture or, in the educational context, the culture of a specific group within an educational community (Merriam, 1998, pp.13-14). Whilst this research is not an example of an ethnography in its characteristic form which would involve participation in people’s daily lives for an extended period (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), the ethnographic element of the approach is seen in the particular way the participants were perceived - as experts on what the researcher wants to find out about (Burns, 2000). It is also seen in the use of theory

at the beginning of the study to provide a lens that shapes what is looked at and the questions asked (Creswell, 2003, p.119). Finally in the socio-cultural interpretation of the data, participants' meanings and patterns of social interactions are described and reconstructed (Merriam, 1998). "Ethnographies re-create for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people" (LeCompte & Preissle with Tesch, 1993, pp.2-3). The use of phenomenological and ethnographic procedures is made more explicit in the later, Data Collection and Data Analysis sections.

Role of the researcher

Research cannot be value-free or bias-free. Reflexivity is a term used for the recognition that a researcher is part of the phenomena studied - not disassociated from the research and not fully participating (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). The need for a researcher to identify biases, values and personal interests about the research topic and process is widely expressed (e.g. Janesick, 2000; Creswell, 2003).

An employment background in research projects concerning educational participation access and equity issues over the last decade is an indication of a valuing of PCET participation for individual students and more widely. It is also indicative of a view of each individual's right to participate in this level of education. Steps taken in attempting to minimise the effect of that personal background included emphasising to participants that interest was in their views and experiences, and being honest and open about the research purpose. By going to the rural areas to find rural students' and other people's views it was hoped to limit the effect of researcher status. In explaining the research and the reason for selecting the rural students as participants reference was made to previous research that featured the 'official' views of those in the Department of Education and the schools and colleges. It was stressed that by contrast, the aim was to find out what the transition from school to college and beyond was like from their particular perspective, and that therefore there were no right or expected answers and all experiences and views were sought and valued. (Further detail is in the introductory statements in the Phase 1 and 2 interviews in Appendices P and Q respectively.)

Since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, data have been filtered through a particular theoretical position and set of biases; it is almost always

up to the researcher to decide what is important and what should be attended to (Merriam, 1998). Whilst granting that it is possible to have excluded data on this basis, both in the handwritten record of Phase 1 and 2 interviews and in the transcriptions of the Phase 3 interviews, the commitment to gaining a greater understanding of the issues from the participants' perspective was very strong. Reference has already been made to a personal employment background in educational access and equity research. The benefits of increasing understanding of what factors encourage rural students to continue with PCET will accrue to those in rural schools and communities, and there is no personal gain from the outcomes of the research being one way or the other. In collecting interview data, concentration was on what people actually said and in recording it as exactly as possible. Many years of interviewing experience have resulted in the development of a system of abbreviations. However, in order to accurately record participants' words they were frequently asked to repeat what they had said and a reading back of what had been written to check its accuracy was also a common occurrence. A lengthy period of time was spent in the field, on five separate occasions, collecting and reviewing data in order to study the subjective states of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 46). In interpreting the data the aim was to add to knowledge and understanding not make judgements about individuals, schools or communities.

The presence of a researcher might also affect the research participants and setting in several ways. This influence is known as reactivity (Maxwell, 1996). In this research encouragement of students to continue or persist with PCET may have occurred, merely by including them in the research and inquiring about their transition experiences. Researcher presence might create a 'halo' effect (Patton, 1990, p.473) with students being more inclined to persist because they knew there was research interest in students who are continuing. Also, asking students for their opinions might be creating opinions.

Attempts to minimise the effect of researcher presence is questioned by some researchers as a meaningful goal (e.g. Maxwell, 1996) but most researchers discuss ways of preventing the more undesirable effect of researcher presence (e.g. Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2003). These focus on ensuring that the researcher-participant relationship is as "natural, inobtrusive, (sic) and non-threatening" as possible in order to "capture what is important in the minds of the subjects themselves" (Bogdan &

Biklen, 1992, p.47). Previous interviewing experience enabled the development of strong skills in interacting with participants in such a manner. Indeed, research participants made unsolicited remarks regarding the researcher's ability to "make it easy to talk to you." The interview schedule had a list of issues to be addressed as a starting point and, as was explained to the participants, did not necessarily have to be followed at all, or closely, or exclusively. This was in line with broad phenomenological interview principles to "vary, alter or not use at all" the series of questions when the participant "shares the full story of his or her experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p.114). An opportunity was given at the end for participants to add or discuss anything else they thought was relevant, appropriate or had not already been mentioned or discussed. The list of issues was in fact followed fairly closely, and participants indicated it was relevant, appropriate, comprehensive and "everything was covered." Sometimes particular issues were pursued in greater depth with a participant, and again, this possibility was made clear to people at the beginning of the interview. At different times during the interviews it was also reiterated that interest was in what they themselves thought rather than conventional wisdom or what was politically correct, or the views of the school or college.

The possibility that participants may react differently to an 'outsider' (Collins, 1986 in Olesen, 2000, p.227) who was not from the school or college and not from the rural area was recognised. Students may also expect a researcher's interest to be in discussing the academic side of their post-Year 10 study experiences. This view would have been quickly revised as some of questions were about other aspects of students' PCET experiences, (e.g. their relationships with peers, combining work and study). Constant efforts were also made to ensure that students did not perceive they were being interviewed by someone in authority or from the University of Tasmania with particular views, for instance of university education as more valuable than other forms of PCET. The wording of questions (e.g. questions 29, 46, and 71 in the Phase 1 interview schedule in Appendix P) reminded participants of the interest in all forms of PCET, and this was spelled out by saying, "such as vocational education and training or VET, traineeships and on-the-job training." The intention was to gain their trust by showing a genuine interest in the range of different views that might exist. In addition it was hoped to show openness to, and respect for everyone's views and values, including those who did not necessarily value PCET for all students. Regular reference to recording their responses carefully and using their

exact words was intended to bring to this to their attention. The time taken to do this added to the interview length but none of the participants objected.

There is a need to reflect on the particular decisions made about the researcher-participant relationship and the effects these can have on the research (Maxwell, 1996 p.67). There was a consciousness of the fact that relationships with participants were to be collaborative ones. As well as their participation in interviews students were going to assist with gaining access to the people who had encouraged them, in order to arrange for interviews with those people. Also, after data collection and analysis, all participants' collaboration was sought in confirming or disconfirming that the construction of their meanings into research findings was an accurate one.

Because the interest was in family, school and community factors that encouraged students, and because there were varying degrees of this encouragement, relationships with those students who had a lesser degree of encouragement from these sources may have been less conducive to gaining high quality data than that gained from highly encouraged students. This was noted as a possibility during the first interviews with a small number of students.

Stake (1995) includes in the role of the case study researcher those of biographer and interpreter. Though not conducting a case study, perceiving the research role in such terms was helpful as the research deals with a part of the life of student participants and that part is described in depth, much as a biographer would write. Similarly useful was Stake's outlining of the full role of an interpreter in the research process. "Standard qualitative designs call for the persons most responsible for interpretations to be in the field, making observations, exercising subjective judgment, analysing and synthesizing, all the while realizing their own consciousness" (Stake, 1995, p.41). Stake's recognition of the need to present people as complex creatures also contains valuable advice to guard against seeing only a single dimension of the studied part of people's lives or writing to fit a stereotype (1995, p.97). This was especially important as previous research had emphasised that young people are not making PCET decisions in isolation from other decisions (Looker & Dwyer, 1998) and later research continued to describe these decisions as part of overall decision making to manage complex lives in a changing social world (Stokes & Wyn, 2007).

What a researcher brings to the research from their background and identity may be seen as a bias, but may also be viewed as a positive addition to the research (e.g. as bringing a unique flavour to the research). It is hoped that the preceding discussion indicates that all possible measures were taken to ensure it was a positive addition.

An outline of the research steps follows in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Research sequence: Planning and conducting the research

Date	Research activity	Participants
Jan 2003	Ethics approval	University of Tasmania
Feb 2003	Permission to conduct research in Tasmanian government schools	Tasmanian Department of Education
Feb 2003	TAFE approval	TAFE Tasmania
Apr-Jul 2003	Preliminary questionnaires	Interested students from the 8 short-listed schools
Apr-Sep 2003	Phase 1 interviews	Students who had attended one of the selected rural high schools. had been encouraged to continue to PCET by someone in their family, school or community. had successfully completed Year 11 studies at an urban senior secondary or TAFE college in 2002. were undertaking Year 12 or TAFE studies in 2003, and planning to continue with some form of PCET in 2004.
Jul-Dec 2003	Phase 2 interviews	People nominated by students as having encouraged them (or 'encouraging others')
Mar-Sep 2004	Phase 3 interviews	Students who had been interviewed in Phase 1
Apr 2005	Student focus group	Student participants who in 2005 were studying or working in the Macquarie area
May 2005	'Encouraging others' focus group	Phase 2 interview participants who lived in/around Pieman

Ethical issues

Before data collection could begin it was necessary to consider the ethical issues involved in the conduct of the research and there were certain procedures to follow in order to obtain permission for the research. The approval of the University of Tasmania's Southern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee was required. (A copy of the notification of approval is in Appendix B.)

Essentially the University of Tasmania's Southern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee were seeking to be assured that participants' privacy and rights would be properly respected. In particular, that they would be given adequate information about the research purpose, would be participating voluntarily and would

understand their right to withdraw any time during the research. Any risk involved in their participation would also have to be identified prior to the research beginning.

A method of approaching participants to invite their participation in the different phases of interviews without infringing their privacy was devised. This is detailed in the following section, Gaining access to the research sites. The letters inviting participation in Phase 1 and 2 interviews contained comprehensive information about the research (see Appendices E and G respectively) and offered further explanation or clarification with a number of different alternatives for doing this, for instance at the first face-to-face meeting, or by telephone. This ensured that each person was well-informed about the nature and implications of their participation.

It was envisaged that parental consent may be required as some of the students may not be 18 years old at the beginning of the study and provision was made for this. (Information letters for parents and consent forms to be signed in order to permit the participation of these under-age students are in Appendices F and K respectively.)

Another ethical aspect was the need to minimise researcher impact on the research setting. Initial meetings were carefully timed in consultation with college staff in order to avoid any clash with other college or student activities. The Phase 1 interviews were planned during a period of the year when there would be least intrusion or conflict with students' study timetable, especially important in Year 12. Every contact with students was negotiated at a time and place to suit their convenience, and this sometimes resulted in cancellation and rescheduling of interviews.

In order to maintain participants' anonymity their names were not recorded either on the interview schedules, audiotapes or transcripts of interviews. Similarly the names of those participating in the focus groups were not used in the focus groups or on the audiotapes of those focus groups. Personal details were obtained only for the purpose of contacting participants and were kept separately from interview transcripts. Measures were taken to minimise the possibility that a participant might breach the confidentiality of another participant in the focus groups. All participants were asked to agree, by signing the focus group consent form, to abide by the requirement not to mention elsewhere anything that was said in the focus group by

anyone else. This was brought to the attention of all participants in the information letter inviting participation, in statements on the consent form and verbally before starting the session. The fact that this might happen in spite of these measures being taken was also mentioned to participants. The student and 'encouraging others' focus group information letters are contained in Appendices H and I respectively and the two consent forms are in Appendices M and N. All data gathered were kept in a locked filing cabinet and in password-protected computer files. After being kept securely in the Faculty of Education for the prescribed 5 year period, the written data will be destroyed by shredding, and the audiotapes will be magnetically wiped to remove all traces of the recording.

As part of ensuring the ethical conduct of the research, the accuracy of interpretation of the data was checked with participants. This is described in detail later in this chapter (in the section, Verifying the accuracy of findings).

In the writing up of the research, pseudonyms are used instead of names of individuals, schools, colleges and rural communities. This enabled a guarantee to be given that the identity of participants and rural communities would not be revealed in any reports or publications arising from the research. Pseudonyms were also used for the urban centres, except in Chapter 1, in the discussion of the Tasmanian context for the research in Chapter 2 and in this Chapter where this was counterproductive to clarity and sense.

There are some possible benefits that might accrue to individuals being studied or their families. For example, students might reflect on their participation in the study and this may assist them with development of their aspirations, further career planning or development of persistence. Younger siblings of the students may also benefit in a similar way if there is any family discussion about students' participation in the research. The possibility of this would be increased in families where parents or older siblings were also interviewed.

Gaining access to the research sites and participants

Maxwell (1996) has suggested that the use of terms such as 'gaining entry to the setting,' 'establishing rapport with research participants,' 'gaining access' and 'negotiating entry' is a misleading way of thinking about this aspect of research. His

rationale is that this is not a single event and rarely involves anything like total access to the setting or participants, and that what you need to establish is “a relationship that enables you to ethically learn the things you need to learn in order to validly answer your research questions” (1996, p.66). In contemplating the type of relationship to be developed with student participants in the research important considerations were that the relationship would need to be a trusting and an ongoing one. The initial interview would be followed about 12 months later by a second one and it was important to be able to resume the relationship quickly without losing ground. In addition students were asked to nominate others who had encouraged them as research participants. It was important to see the relationship as a complex and changing entity (Maxwell, 1996) rather than a one-off entry or access-gaining exercise as it is frequently described (e.g. Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Access to Tasmanian Department of Education sites and participants

Permission was required from the Tasmanian Department of Education in order to conduct research in government schools (including senior secondary colleges). The University of Tasmania’s detailed research ethics guidelines and prior approval helped ensure the task was straightforward in the first instance. (A copy of the Department’s approval letter is in Appendix C.)

Clearly initial contact would be through a series of ‘gatekeepers’ (Creswell, 1998, p.117) in the Tasmanian Department of Education and the schools and colleges where the rural students were enrolled. Gatekeepers require information about the study, such as the reason for site selection, what will be done at the site, whether this will be disruptive, how the results will be reported and whether there are any gains to the gatekeeper and the participants from the study (Creswell, 1998, pp.117-118). The Department of Education’s interest was in the issue of consent from students and parents, the educational significance and/or benefits to students, whether teachers or other personnel were required to assist with the research and plans for dissemination of the results of the research. Full information about the study was provided at each step of the access- and permission-gaining process. (Copies of student and parent information letters are in Appendices E and F respectively. Copies of student and parent consent forms are in Appendices J and K respectively. The list of issues to be addressed in the preliminary written questionnaire and the Phase I interview schedule are provided in Appendices O and P respectively.) Granting of Department

of Education permission to conduct the research was followed by telephone contact with the six District Superintendents then with Principals of the recommended schools. The discussions enabled the short-listing of eight schools in rural communities where the culture was one of encouraging students with PCET. The selection criteria for schools and students are listed later in this chapter in the Data Collection section.

The next step in gaining access to participants was via telephone conversations with senior secondary college Principals, as the Department of Education permission was subject to individual school and college Principals' agreement. Topics of discussion were the likelihood of obtaining sufficient numbers of students in Year 12 from the eight short-listed schools who would be continuing with post-Year 12 education and training, obtaining permission to approach students initially, timing of the Phase 1 interviews, and protocols for outsiders visiting the college. Copies of the information letter, consent form, preliminary questionnaires and Phase 1 interview schedule were posted out to Principals.

The more detailed arrangements for the dissemination of information letters, the initial meeting with students and the conduct of interviews were negotiated with either an Assistant Principal, or Country or Rural Student Liaison Officer referred by the college Principals. As the interviews were to be conducted outside classroom times and mentioned had been made of wishing to avoid possible clashes with other college events or busy times, there were no fears that the research data collection would interfere with classroom work or college activities. All college staff were assured of the desire for the research to be unobtrusive and non-interfering. The information letter assured student anonymity, mentioned that the study was PhD research, that findings could be disseminated to rural communities, schools and colleges if they wished and also explained why the students and schools were chosen. Verbal emphasis was placed on the fact that research interest was not in the individual students in particular, but as examples of the range of students who were planning a variety of post-Year 12 options. None of the students, school or college Principals expressed a wish for anything in return, but one school Principal was especially keen to receive the findings when later contact was made with participants about this. Another school Principal and two teachers were keen to participate in the focus group and comment on the findings.

Access to TAFE sites and participants

Although only a small minority of students proceed directly to TAFE after completing Year 10 – as mentioned in earlier Chapters, a written request was made to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of TAFE Tasmania to gain permission to invite TAFE students to participate in the research. (A copy of the emailed response is contained in Appendix D.) The TAFE CEO was one of several key people (Merriam 1998) who played a valuable role in locating students for the research. The need to be “persistent, flexible and creative” in negotiating access and permission (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992 p.81) was especially relevant to the process involved in gaining access to TAFE students. TAFE enrolment procedures do not require details of the high school attended by the student so identification of appropriate students was not a simple matter. A number of flyers printed on brightly-coloured paper were provided to place on noticeboards around the TAFE campuses in Hobart and Launceston inviting students to make contact if they were interested in participating in the research. There was less concern generally about ethical issues compared with that of the Department of Education, as the TAFE students were considered to be adults and able to make their own decisions about participation.

As was the case with the Department of Education there was a series of others who were consulted after formal permission was granted. These were Student Services staff, teachers of pre-vocational courses and supervisors of the Hobart and Launceston student residences. After discussion with these other people the use of a flyer on college noticeboards to recruit students was abandoned in favour of more direct methods. A number of alternative avenues were explored to identify students who had attended one of the selected schools and send them a letter inviting their participation.

Full information about all aspects of the research and all documentation was provided to all of these people, in the same way as for the senior secondary colleges. (The student information letter, consent form, Preliminary Questionnaire and Phase 1 interview schedule are in Appendices E, J, O and P respectively.) By providing this level of detail about the research to people whom senior secondary and TAFE students knew well and with whom they had established a degree of trust, the likelihood of obtaining participants was increased, as these others would be able to

reassure students about all aspects of research and personally encourage them to participate.

The process used at the senior secondary and TAFE colleges bears out the statement that “getting permission to conduct the study involves more than getting an official blessing. It involves laying the groundwork for rapport with those with whom you will be spending time” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.82). Some of the Assistant Principals and Country or Rural Liaison Officers in the colleges were instrumental in encouraging students to attend the initial meeting and in locating additional student participants who had either not attended or been unable to attend those meetings. The level of information given to the people initially contacted was an important factor in their later willingness to collaborate in recruiting students for the research.

Access to those that encouraged the students

Gaining access to participants for the Phase 2 interviews was via the students who had been encouraged by them. As mentioned in the earlier section, Ethical Issues, this was in accordance with the University’s ethical procedures. In the Phase 1 interviews students were asked about the people who had encouraged them to continue with PCET. The possibility of participation of these other people had been raised at the beginning of the interview and at the completion of the interview each student was asked if s/he thought anyone who had encouraged them would be interested in participating in the research. Where this was the case, arrangements were made that the student would contact the person to ascertain this and, in order to arrange the interview, either pass on the person’s contact details (with their permission) or provide a telephone number and email address so the other person could make the first contact for interview arrangements. This process (which was easier to organise than to describe) was necessary to protect individuals’ privacy and worked well; however, none of the participants appeared to be concerned about anonymity or privacy issues. Rather they expressed their delight in being asked to participate and have their views recorded. For example, a teacher at one of the rural schools who had encouraged one of the students commented, “It’s good to know there’s interest in the problems rural students have with further education.” This is consistent with the experiences of many researchers. “Unless they have had a bad experience recently, people are generally cooperative, often pleased to have their

story known, happy to help someone with their job, although not optimistic that the research will be of benefit to them” (Stake, 1995, p.58).

Data Collection

Sampling

In order to build a picture of the family and community factors that encourage Tasmanian rural students to continue or persist with PCET a very specific group of individuals was required. To obtain data that would be most helpful in understanding this, a particular type of theoretical or purposive sample (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) was indicated. Critical sampling (Creswell, 2005, p.206) is a type of purposive sampling used to study individuals or cases that represent a phenomenon in a dramatic or exceptional way, thereby enabling much to be learned about that phenomenon. A sample consisting of students who had until Year 10 attended a rural school where they were encouraged to continue with PCET was most likely to provide helpful and useful data, rather than a random sample. An alternative term is criterion-based sampling (Patton, 2002) where criteria are developed to capture the appropriate sample.

There were two aspects to the selection of the sample – the students themselves and the type of school and community from which they came. Criteria for selecting suitable schools were those

- where students were doing well and felt successful,
- which had a good record of retention to Year 11 courses in urban senior secondary colleges,
- which had good links with the community,
- which had a commitment to familiarising students with the world beyond the rural area and an emphasis on the PCET options available to young people both within and beyond the rural community,
- which were not survey-fatigued, and
- where student achievement did not appear to fall significantly below that of urban students.

Department of Education Superintendents of the six Tasmanian school Districts were first consulted for their recommendations of relevant schools in their District and

discussions with the Principals of suggested schools assisted with the final selection of eight schools.

To maximise the likelihood of achieving an appropriate sample students were sought who

- had attended one of the selected rural high schools,
- had been encouraged to continue beyond Year 10 by someone in their family or community,
- had successfully completed Year 11 studies at an urban senior secondary or TAFE college in 2002,
- were undertaking Year 12 or TAFE studies in 2003, and
- were planning to continue with some form of post-Year 12 education and training in 2004 (e.g. full time university and TAFE courses, VET courses provided by a private training organisation and traineeships, apprenticeships or cadetships completed concurrently with full time employment).

It was most likely that a good response, in terms of encouraging factors, would be obtained from students selected in this way. These students would be information-rich cases (Patton, 2002) for study in-depth, and would enable a great deal to be learned about the issue of central importance to the purpose of the research. “In many instances more can be learned from intensively studying extreme or unusual cases” (Patton, 2002, p.230).

As outlined in Chapter 2, for the purpose of the research the definition of rural is taken as “places outside the major centres in Tasmania” (i.e. outside Hobart, Launceston, Burnie and Devonport). This is very similar to the definitions based on metropolitan or non-metropolitan status of a place used in some previous research (e.g. Marks, et al., 2000). Four of the schools sampled from were situated in towns where, at the time the research commenced the population ranged from 700 to 2000 with the fifth town having a somewhat larger population of just over 4000. Some students themselves lived in much smaller settlements, e.g. with less than 250 people (4 students), with 250-500 people (3 students).

The sample consisted of 24 students who had attended Year 10 at one of five schools which were in the north, north-east, east and south of the state and in 2004 were enrolled in Year 12 studies at one of four senior secondary colleges in the north or south of the state. A list in Appendix A summarises information about the students' pseudonyms, the school and college attended and the type of experience of the initial years of PCET.

A second sample of 55 people to be interviewed was obtained through requesting students to nominate those who had encouraged them to continue with PCET. This sampling of 'encouraging others' through a process of reference from the original student participants is a type of snowball sampling technique (Denscombe, 1998, p.16) and enabled the inclusion of others, who had encouraged the students to continue with their PCET, and is intended to add valuable additional data which will help in understanding the factors within the family and the community that shape PCET participation. The name of the nominating student was able to be used (with their permission) thus enhancing the researcher's bona fides and credibility (Denscombe, 1998, p.16).

Once the research findings were summarised, all study participants received a copy in the post and were asked to comment on their accuracy. The letter also invited their participation in a focus group interview to discuss the findings. A list of issues arising from the findings to be discussed in the focus groups was also enclosed. (Copies of the letters inviting students and 'encouraging others' to participate are included in Appendices H and I and the list of issues is in Appendix U.)

Two separate focus group interviews were planned, one with students and the other with 'encouraging others'. The student focus group was held in the urban centre in the region where most student participants were living. The 'encouraging others' were widely dispersed geographically so the community selected as the location for the focus group was the one in where the largest number of potential participants were located. All participants were invited to make their comments in writing or via email or telephone. This enabled the inclusion of the views of those for whom attendance at a focus group was impossible.

Steps in the data collection process are outlined in Table 4.2, overleaf.

Table 4.2: Steps in the data collection process

Date	Type of data	Place	Number of participants	Explanatory notes
Apr 2003	Preliminary questionnaires	Argyle College, Bathurst College, Campbell College	16 students	
Apr-May 2003	Phase 1 interviews	Argyle College, Bathurst College, Campbell College	16 Students*	These were the same 16 students as in row 1, above.
May 2003	Preliminary questionnaires and Phase 1 interviews	Davey College	4 students	
Jul 2003	Preliminary questionnaires and Phase 1 interviews	Davey College	3 students	
Aug-Sept 2003	Phase 1 interviews	Bathurst College, Campbell College	2 students	
Jul-Dec 2003	Phase 2 interviews	Homes and workplaces in the five communities and surrounding rural areas	55 'encouraging others'	
Mar- Sept 2004	Phase 3 interviews	Homes, educational institutions and workplaces in Macquarie, Frankland and the five communities.	24* students	25 students completed Preliminary questionnaires and Phase 1 interviews but one of these had not completed Year 11 studies in an urban senior secondary college, so that interview was discarded
April 2005	Summary of findings verification	Posted or emailed to all student and 'encouraging other' participants	5 students and 3 'encouraging others'	
April 2005	Student focus group to verify findings and discuss issues arising from findings	University of Tasmania	6 Students*	3 more students arranged to participate but were unable to, due to illness, a last minute call into work, and insufficient funds for petrol to travel to Hobart (traineeship/job ended suddenly).
May 2005	'Encouraging others' focus group to verify findings and discuss issues arising from findings	Council Chambers in a town in one of the rural areas.	6 'encouraging others'*	Postal and email responses were received from 3 more 'encouraging others' resident in other parts of Tasmania

Initial contact with students was in March and April 2003 via an information letter inviting participation. As the sample was an anonymous one, these letters were prepared and given to senior secondary or TAFE college staff to distribute to all students who had attended one of the eight selected schools. (A copy of the student information letter is in Appendix E.)

A meeting with interested students was held in each senior secondary college offering further information and answering any questions they had. At this meeting students read and signed the informed consent form (Copy in Appendix J.) The students who were under 18 years of age and required parental consent before participating were provided with a parent information letter and consent form. (Copies of these are in Appendices F and K.) These students were contacted by telephone or email shortly after the meeting to make further arrangements for their participation. Those students not requiring parental consent completed a Preliminary questionnaire at the time (Copy in Appendix O) and the responses to these questions established whether the students met the criteria outlined for sampling. Students' contact details were requested to enable the arrangement of interviews.

Staff in the senior secondary colleges encouraged students who met with the selection criteria but had not been able to attend the initial meeting, to participate in the research and a number of extra students were included through their efforts. Arrangements were made with a fifth senior secondary college, to invite students to participate and an initial meeting was set up in September 2003. Unfortunately uncontrollable events prevented this meeting taking place, and disappointingly, a rescheduling of the meeting was impossible; however, the sample of 24 students was deemed sufficient for meaningful findings to emerge.

As mentioned previously, in the Gaining access section, there were difficulties in identifying the rural high school attended by TAFE students. This information is not requested for enrolment records so TAFE staff could not readily identify appropriate students. Various avenues were tried by Student Services staff to locate students who may fit the sampling criteria. Teachers in departments that were more likely to have students who enrolled directly after completing Year 10 (e.g. Painting & Decorating, Carpentry & Joinery, Plastering & Bricklaying) were called upon; however, they were unable to locate any appropriate students. Student

accommodation supervisors in Hobart and Launceston were slightly more successful and a total of 21 information letters were provided for distribution to prospective participants. (A copy of the letter appears in Appendix E.) A small number of students expressed interest but after discussion did not fit the sampling criteria, so unfortunately no students attending TAFE in 2003 directly after Year 10 were included in the research. The student accommodation supervisors expressed the opinion that the nature of the TAFE study these students were engaged in at the time might explain some of the lack of response. They were temporarily living in the urban area whilst attending TAFE in a short but concentrated or 'block release' course, and many of them were working concurrently. However, the sample of 24 included students with a range of different post-Year 12 aspirations and destinations and was judged adequate to permit important findings to be made about rural students who continue initially to urban senior secondary college-based PCET.

Interviews

Face-to-face interviews were used to obtain information about students' current study experiences and events in the past and provide the detailed, rich data required for in-depth insight into the topic. Administering semi-structured interview protocols may present challenges where the topic is personal and sensitive, as is the case in this research, and careful handling would be required to obtain open and honest responses. Interviews were considered to be especially appropriate because the information being sought was based on emotions, experiences and feelings as well as factual matters (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Information sought was not likely to be obtained from anywhere else, only from the student respondents and those that had encouraged them. Email and telephone were utilised in a two cases where face-to-face interviews with those who encouraged the students were unable to be organised.

Phase 1 interviews

Phase 1 interviews contained a combination of structured questions to collect base background data about the students and their families, (i.e. personal information, educational background, reason for continuing to college), and also semi-structured questions to gather information about their study experiences since Year 10 and about the encouragement they had received. (A copy of the interview schedule is in Appendix P.) These latter, open-ended questions were intended to provide the respondents with an opportunity to develop ideas and elaborate on points of interest.

This was essential to discover the nature of the encouraging factors, to examine the social capital components of encouragement and to explore the respondents' personal accounts of their experiences and feelings. The development of a series of questions, in advance of the interview, aimed at evoking a comprehensive account of the person's experience of a phenomenon is a feature of phenomenological data collection methods (Moustakas, 1994, p.114).

Phase 2 interviews

At the completion of the Phase 1 interviews students were asked to nominate others who had encouraged them to continue with PCET, and whom they thought would be interested in participating in the research. In accordance with ethical guidelines, to maintain potential participants' rights to privacy, these 'encouraging others' were not contacted directly, but via the nominating student, as described earlier.

Phase 2 interviews were semi-structured with a list of issues to be raised. (A copy of the interview schedule is in Appendix Q.) Questions were open-ended and focused on how the participant had encouraged the student and any other students to continue with PCET and on the factors that rural students considered when developing post-Year 10 aspirations. Other topics covered their views on the value of PCET, and community influences on the student's or students' choices and aspirations.

A total of 55 people were interviewed from students' families, schools, colleges and from within and outside the rural community. Family members included parents, older siblings, grandparents, aunts and cousins. Those from the schools and colleges were rural high school Principals, teachers and careers advisers, senior secondary college teachers and careers advisers, and peers. From within the five communities there were family friends, the mayor of a local Council, a local newspaper editor, people from the business community and local industries who were casual job employers of some students or represented scholarship or bursary providers. A number of family friends living outside the community were also included.

Phase 3 interviews

As the students proceeded a further year with their PCET they were interviewed again. The introductory statements to the interviews emphasised the follow-up nature of the interview, and the discussion of any new encouraging factors. (See

Appendix R for a copy of the Phase 3 interview schedule.) These interviews were conducted in 2004 whilst the students were in the first year of a university or TAFE course, were completing a VET course or were engaged in other activity. All 24 students were happy to be interviewed again, even though a very small number were not engaged in any form of PCET. In these few cases, the interview focused on the changes to students' plans and the particular factors that had intervened.

Introductory statements for all interviews reiterated the purpose of the research, the interest in finding out from rural students themselves and those that had encouraged them, about what had encouraged them to continue with PCET. It also re-emphasised that the interview should be a discussion rather than a formal question-and-answer session, explained that the schedule did not necessarily have to be followed and that there was opportunity at the end to add anything not mentioned or discussed. The list of issues was followed in most instances though not necessarily in the original order. Most participants' remarks at the point for any additional input reflected their perceptions of the interview as comprehensively covering the relevant topics. Some made additional comments and some did not. All interviews were arranged at a time and place suited to individual participants and took place in participants' homes, in senior secondary or TAFE colleges, in workplaces or on university campuses.

Despite the advantages of face-to-face interviews for gathering data about current and past experiences and events directly from participants in their home community, there are also some disadvantages to be noted. The information gathered is indirect having been filtered through the views of interviewees (Creswell, 2003, p.186). However, direct observation of the process of transition from Year 10 through to post-Year 12 education and training is not possible. The possible bias from researcher presence is noted again here, but has been discussed elsewhere (in the Role of researcher section).

Another disadvantage is that all participants were not equally articulate and perceptive. With some students in particular it was harder to keep an easy rhythm and keep the "talk turn" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.270). Use of nods, sounds such as "Mmm," and probes such as "Why is that?" or "Could you tell me a bit more about that?" were often necessary to encourage some students or to gain more detailed

information. In the case of those that encouraged the students, a small number said, "I don't think there's much that I can tell you," or that they were willing to be interviewed, "if you think there's anything I can help with." The response was to emphasise that interest was in the views of anyone who had been nominated as having encouraged a student. With regard to levels of perception, some Principals, teachers and parents gave insightful responses when discussing student experiences. Surprisingly a few students were key informants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.67). One student was studying Sociology and issues surrounding rural retention had been part of the course content. A student studying Dance had featured a similar topic as the subject of some of her performance pieces. Another student appeared to have become very engaged with the issues covered in the interviews and reflective about her experiences. At the end of her Phase 3 interview, after being thanked for her participation and involvement in the research, she remarked, "It's been really good doing this."

Focus groups

Focus group interviews were used to determine whether the participants thought that the summary of the research findings was accurate from their point of view and to discuss a list of issues arising from those findings. (Copies of the summary of findings are included in Appendices S and T.) The summary of findings and list of issues arising from the findings was posted to participants ahead of time to enable more considered discussion to take place. (A copy of the list of issues is in Appendix U.) Participants in the sessions were able to discuss the findings and this encouraged them "to interact with each other so that the quality of the output is enhanced" (Greenbaum, 2000). For the student group the summary covered factors that impacted on students' decisions and experiences and the role of students' networks of relationships with others in their decision making and their experiences. For the 'encouraging others' group the summary covered factors that impacted on students' decisions, the role of students' networks of relationships with others in their decision making, and the role of the community in encouraging students.

Data recording procedures

Each interview was numbered, for reference in data description and analysis, and in order to link it to the participant for member-checking and verification purposes. Participants' responses were recorded directly into blank spaces below each question.

As has been mentioned above (in Role of researcher section) a personally-developed and well-practised system of abbreviations was used for this hand-written record. Thoughts and/or comments were noted in the margins or the back of the previous page to avoid confusion with participants' responses. For some of the background information questions where the responses were more predictable, a set of more likely responses was incorporated to speed up data recording. For example, the highest level of education completed by students' father and those who influenced the students' choice of post-Year 10 option (see questions 21 and 39 in the Phase 1 interview schedule in Appendix P). These options were not verbalised, they were merely recording schema. A few questions had listed responses to choose from. For instance, "When considering your career, how important is it for you to have a) a job that is interesting, b) a job that uses your abilities and talents, etc." (See question 35 of Phase 1 interview schedule in Appendix P) but also included space for other responses. It was made very clear that the list was not exhaustive.

Phase 3 interviews were audio-taped as writing was impossible between April and September 2004 due to symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome. Space below each question was left for thoughts and comments but these were reduced because of the physical constraint. Some notes were made as soon as was possible after interview completion. The focus group interviews were also audio-taped.

As noted earlier, in order to maintain participants' anonymity their names were not recorded on the interview schedules, the audiotapes or the transcriptions of interviews. Similarly the names of those participating in the focus groups were not used in the focus groups or on the audiotapes of those focus groups.

As depicted in Table 4.2, the students were first interviewed at the senior secondary college they were attending in 2004. The Phase 2 interviews with 'encouraging others' were conducted in the five rural areas in family homes, schools, and workplaces. Phase 3 interviews with the students were conducted in senior secondary or TAFE colleges, homes, workplaces and on the university campuses.

Data Analysis

Interview data gathered consisted of detailed and intricate descriptions of events and people or 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973). The data were transcribed as soon as possible after completion of each interview enabling the assessment of the usefulness

of the questions in the earlier interviews and the addition of further notes and reflections. This also provided an opportunity to identify and/or remove redundant questions. Data analysis was similarly begun in small batches after interviews were conducted and transcribed, and was done by hand enabling “closeness to the data” and “a hands-on feel for it without the intrusion of a machine” (Creswell, 2005, p.234).

Analysis centred on participants’ meanings and the way they understand their experiences and situations and was designed to enable the complexity of the situation of rural students and their families and communities to be described and analysed, as well as enabling the focus to rest on the encouraging factors in context and to see how they are related to other factors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transcripts were analysed to identify key themes that would facilitate a better understanding of the process of students’ transition from high school through to the beginning of post-Year 12 education and training.

During analysis it was noted that the purposive sampling method had resulted in a sizable sub-group of student participants (12) who had attended one of the five schools and one of the four colleges. As it was possible that the voices of this sub-group of students may overshadow the overall students’ voice a preliminary examination was made of student response patterns by school and college attended. This revealed more similarities among students from the five schools and four colleges than differences.

The key themes and the minor themes nested under each are represented in the coding frame contained in Appendix V. The key themes are

- Difficulties and issues faced in participating in PCET;
- Encouragement or discouragement students received to develop PCET aspirations;
- Encouragement or discouragement received to persist with and realise PCET aspirations;
- Students’ relationships to family and community networks;
- Norms and values regarding PCET;
- Trust; and

- Social capital resources.

Appendix V also contains exemplar coded transcript excerpts.

Steps in the data analysis following a process outlined by Creswell (2003) are shown in Table 4.3 overleaf.

Table 4.3: Steps in the data analysis process

Step	Activity			
1. Organising and preparing the data for analysis	Transcribing, checking and amending interviews.	Collating fieldnotes and memos from interviews	Physically cutting and pasting together all responses to each question as second set of data	
2. Reading through data	Obtaining a general impression of data (pencilling notes in transcript margins)	Noting where credibility and usefulness of data might be questionable (pencilling in notes in margins)	Recording first ideas about meaning of data.	Recording where a question might be redundant or an additional question is warranted in future interviews.
3. First level coding (Coding frame and examples are in Appendix V)	Labelling sections of text according to their meaning.	Grouping together of like topics, relabelling	Overall listing of topics from all interviews completed so far.	
Steps 1-3 were repeated with successive batches of interviews until all were dealt with.				
4. More detailed analysis - describing the students and their situation (Coding frame and examples are in Appendix V)	Developing the categories to describe the students. Labelling the categories. Double-checking for codes not expected, contrary to developing themes - and/or not relating to elements of students' social capital.	Within case and cross case analysis to identify the different perspectives or dimensions of these categories.	Developing categories and interconnections of categories to develop theory/model	Colour coding of segments of text on individual transcripts according to the coding labels. Locating quotations and other evidence to illustrate the categories
5. Deciding how to present findings	Description in text, including excerpts from interviews.			
6. Making an interpretation of findings	Personal interpretation from own background and understandings	Comparison with information from the literature	Questions raised by the data or analysis that were unforeseen.	Suggestions for policy reform, change in practices.

Verifying the research findings

Steps to verify the accuracy and credibility of the research findings were taken at various stages of the research and have been alluded to on several occasions.

“Validity does not carry the same connotations as it does in quantitative research, nor is it a companion of reliability or generalizability” (Creswell, 2003, p.195). Some qualitative researchers use the term validity in a straightforward, commonsense way (e.g. Maxwell, 1996, p.87) to refer to the correctness or credibility of a description or conclusion. Others use alternative terms that reflect the suggestion that the research findings are accurate from the viewpoint of the researcher, participants and readers of the research account. For example Lincoln and Guba (1985) use “credibility,” “transferability,” “dependability” and “confirmability” to establish the “trustworthiness” of a piece of research instead of the quantitative terms “internal validity,” external validity,” “reliability” and “objectivity.” These alternative terms are used in arguing for the trustworthiness of this research.

Strategies to make sure research findings are accurate and credible are well-documented (e.g. Creswell, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Creswell (2003, p.196) describes eight primary strategies available including

- triangulation,
- member-checking,
- using rich, thick description to convey the findings,
- clarifying the bias that the researcher brings to the study,
- presenting negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes, and
- spending prolonged time in the field.

Each of the above six were drawn upon in this research. The other two strategies - peer debriefing and use of an external auditor to review the project - were inappropriate for use in this research. In this section the use of triangulation and member-checking only are described, as the use of the other strategies has been described previously. At the beginning of this chapter, when justifying the use of qualitative methods, the plan to present findings in the form of a rich, thick description was mooted. In the section, Role of the researcher, the biases brought to the research were raised and discussed. The intention to present negative or

discrepant information is flagged in the outline of data analysis steps. The considerable time spent in the field on several different occasions was mentioned in the description of the data collection procedures.

Denzin (1978) describes four kinds of triangulation that contribute to verification and validation of qualitative analysis

- checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data-collection methods (methods triangulation),
- checking out the consistency of different data sources within the same method (triangulation of sources),
- using multiple analysts to review findings (analyst triangulation), and
- using multiple perspectives or theories to interpret the data (theory/perspective triangulation).

The basic principle of triangulation is that it prevents relying too much on any single data source or method (Patton, 1990, p.193). In this research, triangulation of sources was achieved by comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information derived from the two different phases of interviews. Student interview data gathered in Phase 1 interviews was compared with 'encouraging others' interview data collected in Phase 2 interviews and with student interview data from Phase 3. A single, totally consistent picture was not necessarily an expectation, but rather an understanding of any differences and the underlying reasons for them. The overall pattern in the data from different sources was consistent, but some differences were noted and were explained. For instance, by the realisation that the parents' perspectives were different from students' on some issues, students' perspectives differed from teachers' perspectives on some issues and students' own views sometimes differed from one time to another.

Member checking was utilised to review summary findings from the research, as previously mentioned. This is sometimes referred to as analytical triangulation and is a way to "learn a lot about the accuracy, fairness and validity of the data analysis by getting participants' reactions" (Patton, 1990, p.468). All participants received a copy of the research findings in the post, along with their invitation to take part in a focus group. They were asked to assess whether the findings were an accurate

reflection of the experiences and situation of rural students in deciding to and continuing with PCET. A small number of randomly-selected participants were provided with their interview transcripts for checking. Stake discusses his use of member checking, conceding, “I typically get little back from the actor - not very satisfying but entirely necessary” (1995, p.16). This was also the experience in this research and suggests the non-respondents had no serious disagreement with the findings. The responses that were received via post, email or telephone confirmed the accuracy of the findings.

Face validity is also important (Patton, 1990). This thesis attempts to present a research account that is believable, in which the data are reasonable and the results connect to how people understand the world.

Summary

This chapter has presented

- an explanation and justification of the research approach,
- a description of the sampling and data collection methods,
- an examination and justification of the role of the researcher,
- a discussion of ethical issues,
- a description of the data analysis process, and
- a discussion of the trustworthiness and accuracy of the research.

The next chapter contains the research findings regarding students’ experiences during their first three years of PCET, after completing high school in Year 10 until their participation in post-Year 12 education and training or other activity.

Chapter 5: Summary findings on types of rural student experience of post-compulsory education and training

Introduction: Three types of experience

Students' experiences during the three years immediately after completing high school in Year 10 until their initial year of participation in post-Year 12 education and training varied along several dimensions. In particular, their certainty about their PCET aspiration; whether or not their aspirations underwent change; their perception of the need to move away or travel to attend senior secondary college; their ability to cope with separation from family and friends and their rural community; their ability to cope with living independently; their ability to adjust to and succeed in senior secondary study; and whether or not financial factors were impinging on their PCET participation.

Three types of initial PCET experiences have been identified using the thematic coding and analysis of interview transcripts and focus group discussions, as described in Chapter 4. These are

- A straightforward and successful experience (eight students),
- A problematic but successful experience (ten students) and
- A limited experience (six students).

As outlined in Chapter 4, pseudonyms have replaced real names of people, schools, colleges and places in this chapter.

A straightforward and successful experience

Participation in PCET was, so far, relatively uncomplicated, straightforward and successful for eight students. Certainly during this time they faced change and challenge but overall they perceived the experience as an exciting, anticipated, next phase of their lives presenting changes that were welcome rather than confronting. The uncomplicated nature of the process of transition from school through PCET was related to the fact that, with one exception, students had a well-developed and firmly-held aspiration for a specific post-Year 12 course or had narrowed their choice to a small range of options. A relatively smooth transition was also linked to the fact that all eight shared norms about the high value of PCET with members of

their family. This will be the subject of further discussion in the next chapter. Transition experiences were straightforward in that most of the students had moved directly through Years 11/12. The few that found Year 13 necessary took this in their stride.

Lisa was typical of students in this group. She already had a firm aspiration, a career in teaching, which had been reinforced as appropriate for her by family, high school teachers, peers and people in the community who were teachers. She had happily moved from Chatfield, feeling the need “to get into a bigger place” and was able initially to live with her aunt in Macquarie. She perceived the alternative to moving, daily travel, as “one of the worst things that could happen” because of the time involved, the detrimental effect on energy levels and subsequently on study performance. She had heard about the positive experiences of two older siblings at Campbell College and had been inspired to attend herself. She recalled that her sister “loved it at college, she found it a really friendly environment” and that her brother

...really enjoyed it, he'd come home and tell me all these stories... that also set it in my mind, that it sounded like a wonderful place to go, the teachers sounded supportive, people, like everyone there sounds supportive, I really want to go there.

Reflecting on her college experience in her second interview, she reported having benefited from moving away.

It really prepared me for the rest of my life... prepared me for coming up to Frankland (for university study), where I'm even more independent than what I was in Macquarie 'cos in Macquarie I had my (extended) family still around me.

She found moving away from home “a wonderful experience” although admitted there were moments when she experienced study stress. Her strategies for dealing with this relied on both personal resources and the resources of family and friends with whom she maintained frequent telephone contact. Lisa's Year 12 results were as she had expected and she was successful in gaining entrance to the university course of her choice, though this was a different course from her original intention. At her Phase 3 interview she was satisfied with her pathway since Year 12 and still confident of succeeding with her aspiration.

There were, however, some students within this group that found the experience more challenging. Jenny, for instance, aspired to a career as a pharmacist, and had family and peers who were supportive of this. She lived in a rural area where daily travel to a city college was impossible and was pleased to move away in Year 11, along with a few close friends. Jenny experienced a certain amount of discouragement of her studies during Years 11/12. She found senior secondary study difficult, mentioning in particular pre-tertiary subjects that had exams. She perceived that she had not been well-prepared for college study and thought she was “right behind, especially in the science area.” She felt the disadvantage of not living with family, saying “we don’t have parents that’re with us the whole time ... there’s no-one to push you.” Jenny also had reservations about the adequacy of the Davey College student accommodation saying it “could have been better.” Her first interview responses indicated that Jenny had financial concerns too. She said “My parents are subsidising me at the moment, that’s pretty hard for them, because the Isolated Children’s Allowance is paid termly. Differences in term length make it difficult.” Further financial concerns were revealed in Jenny’s second interview when she indicated that government financial assistance was insufficient for relocated rural students. “They forget that rural students don’t have the money to come and live in town.” She referred to difficulties with purchasing books and domestic items needed whilst studying and living away from home and said “There’s a lot that I don’t have.”

Jenny was hopeful rather than confident of achieving the tertiary entrance score required for entry to the Bachelor of Pharmacy degree and the end of Year 12 brought a realisation that her original aspiration was unattainable. She said “I didn’t like what courses that I got into at Uni. I decided against them. ... I got my third option, I didn’t like it.” In re-evaluating her aspiration she took account of what her peers were doing. “I had friends that were going to do Year 13 and I thought, well why not?” She did not appear confident of succeeding with a specific PCET aspiration, saying she was “looking at other options” and “leaving it up to fate.” She placed little reliance on her family saying “I don’t count on them as much because they don’t really know what they’re talking about half the time. Things have changed so much.” Her strategies for dealing with the difficulties she’d experienced during college were peer-reliant. She turned to friends saying “that’s what they’re there for. ... They’re in the same boat. They know what was going on, they still

have to do it, so.” In time Jenny surmounted her difficulties, completing Year 12 successfully and gaining a place in a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Tasmania.

A problematic but ultimately successful experience

A group of ten students found the three years somewhat more problematic, facing one or more difficulties. As with the first group some were more challenged than others. Seven of the ten appeared to cope with many changes but were seriously challenged by one specific problem, such as a competing non-education aspiration, a change of aspiration, financial concerns about continuing with tertiary studies, difficulty with combining study and part time work, and interruption of study and absences through illness. The remaining three students had more than one problem or ongoing difficulties. However, like the students who experienced a smooth transition, this group also shared norms regarding the value of PCET with family and/or people at school or elsewhere in the community.

Edward was an example of the first sub-group. After achieving well in Year 10 studies he had continued to college to pursue interests in aquaculture and commerce. He had discussed his aspirations with and received advice from parents and grandparents, and with cousins and an uncle who had provided career information. A family friend living and working locally also provided specific career information. Edward’s home was beyond daily travel so he moved to Frankland in Year 11 to live in the Davey College student accommodation. He maintained his close attachments to people in the community through weekend visits to spend time with family and enjoy recreational activities with friends. Whilst mentioning that participating in PCET as a rural student was “a big change” and that moving out meant “you’ve got to do all your own cooking and cleaning... you’ve got to fend for yourself,” he accepted this as necessary, “to get a broader outscope on what there is to do,” because “you have more chance of getting a job if you have been to uni. or TAFE” and “to complete my education.” He admitted he had not expected it to be so hard, noting “the different level of work... the different wavelength of expectations” and concluding, “you don’t really know what to expect.” Financial support was not a concern. Though he was ineligible for Youth Allowance and therefore dependent on his parents, the money was provided in the form of payment for part time work he did for his father’s business, and his parents helped with additional money if needed.

The decision over accommodation in the city was a stressful one for Edward and his family. The experience of stress in moving away from home has also been noted by Stewart in her research among Island students (Stewart, 2004). Edward's mother said "We had no relatives in Frankland... it was big deal... there's full board at (name), boarding or renting. We didn't consider these, too much freedom too soon." Edward reported trying the college accommodation and not being really happy there. He described it as "crap" and "ridiculous" and recalled having to resort to parental intervention for resolution of the problem. His mother provided more detail saying

The villas had no activities room, just a cement yard with a clothes line, not even a bit home-like. We were shown what we thought were standard rooms, and they were ok. What Edward got was very different. The lack of maintenance was obvious. We had to go to the guidance officer at Davey College. Edward had a very unsettled start. I think he'll be doing Year 13.

The effect on Edward's studies was apparent – he did not sit the exam in one subject and failed another. However, after settling into his new accommodation and staying at college for Year 13 he successfully completed requirements for entrance to the Bachelor of Commerce degree at the University of Tasmania and began that course of study in 2005.

Taylor was an example of those in the second sub-group, those with more than one problem or ongoing difficulties during the three years. This was despite sharing norms regarding the value of participating in PCET with her family, high school teachers and others in the community. She had many changes to her original firm aspiration, a career as a Physiotherapist, after realising that her results were not adequate for entry to the course. An ensuing period of searching for a more appropriate aspiration was very unsettling as her father's comment revealed. "Possibly being indecisive now may not be the best." Taylor's enjoyment of her physiotherapy work experience placement in a local hospital formed the basis for her next aspiration, a Bachelor of Nursing. However her Year 12 studies were not progressing well. Her older sister recalled the family's role in encouraging Taylor to persist with her studies saying "She would maybe have had enough, have given up towards the end of this year if it weren't for them. Exams weren't a good experience." Later that year after obtaining more detail about the nursing degree Taylor had second thoughts which were reinforced when her results were not as good

as she had hoped and her tertiary entrance score was below the requirement for entry to that degree.

Taylor relied heavily on her older sister's knowledge about alternative courses and her opinion about what might be suitable. The lengthy and detailed discussions she had with her sister were critical in helping her develop more realistic aspirations. She decided to follow the same path as her older sister, saying "I guess it was mainly because, like she offered a lot of information about it so I knew what I was going into, and it was more of a comfort kind of thing, knowing what I was going into." The fact that her older sister had been successful was also an influence, as the following comment indicates.

I guess I kind of saw, 'cos she did so well at college, and she was doing well at uni. I kind of thought, she's not that different from me, she's pretty much had the same stuff I've had, she's been at the exact same places and like had the same circumstances. If she can do it, I should be able to.

The influence of successful sibling experiences of PCET on career/future choices has been noted in other research. Parents "feel their information and perceptions of postschool options, and the benefits and disadvantages of each, have been increased and enhanced by the experiences of the older sibling during their postschool transition" and "siblings' experiences since leaving school were shown to help shape parental advice" (Abbott-Chapman & Baynes, 2002, p.38-39).

Further difficulties were revealed by Taylor's comment that she would have liked "a clearer picture of university and other options. ... There wasn't really someone that kind of helped you, saying, well hang on, this might not work. ... you had to leave it to trial and error." Taylor's commitment to her university course was waning; at her second interview she was unsure whether she would be continuing to second year.

I'm not a big fan of what I'm doing, not really enjoying it at the moment. ... recently I went to TAFE and had a look at what they offered. I was thinking of perhaps taking time out from uni. and doing a TAFE course ...like the Aged Care one, something that was kind of nursing. ... I'm just really not certain of where I really want to go. ... all the schooling I've done, I want to actually end up in a decent kind of job. I'd hate to get this far and

then pull out of everything. I mean, make half an effort and not end up... .

Taylor was appreciative of the continuing support and encouragement of her family, saying “Basically if my parents hadn’t of pushed me a fair bit I ... would have taken an easier option, perhaps, like they kept me going, in that right direction.” She also appeared to view her home as something of a refuge from the daily strains of study.

... I guess the way it’s kind of stressful and stuff, they offer support. ‘Cos like I’ve got the steady home environment to go back to. Yeah, how stressful it is and it’s kind of absolutely the same there, kind of.”

However she perceived that her post-Year 12 choice would have been different if she had more information about the course. “My actual experience of it (BA first year), ... the exact subjects, if I knew what I’d be doing in them, I reckon if I’d known that I doubt very much that I would have gone into it. I probably would have looked at something else.” The uncertainty had an impact on her motivation.

You don’t know where you’re going, or where it’s going to lead you...like when I’m doing assignments ... it could be a complete waste of my time ... all the stress of getting them done, handing them in on time ... If I could ... see clearly that at the end ... I’d be doing, or something, I’d be a lot more motivated to do it, you know, really wanting to do well to get there. ... I just feel like some of the things I’ve done isn’t really been right ... I’m hoping that if I did do the Aged Care course ... and I think, yeah this is more me, this is where I want to go, this is what I want to do.

A limited experience

A smaller group of six students experienced either limited or lack of success during Years 11/12 and/or in proceeding immediately to post-Year 12 education and training. Elizabeth, for example, had continued to college despite having no clear career aspiration, primarily because of the influence of her mother’s regret over non-participation and that of her close friends’ plans. She said “my mates, they were all continuing on to Argyle College ... so I did.” By the time of her first interview her aspiration was to complete a tourism-related TAFE course though she was undecided about exactly which one. Elizabeth’s commitment to continuing was based on her valuing of PCET for employment-related reasons “to gain more experience, (to) get certificates from TAFE, (to) help me get a job.” The family valuing of PCET

participation for Elizabeth was very explicit and her grandmother, aunt and cousin all passed on regret over their non-participation. The family's encouragement was more important to Elizabeth than that from school or other community sources. She said "They've experienced life, can tell you what's good, what's not. ... because they're your family, because you listen to what they say, I just do (listen)." However, she also recognised that the Pieman School had "made students aware that you need to go to college."

Elizabeth enjoyed her time at college though the need to travel daily appeared to have had some impact. She perceived the distance to college as a considerable drawback in terms of the early start to the day and the time needed for the journey. She recalled these as a downside to Years 11/12 saying "I didn't like travelling, didn't like getting out of bed really early ... I didn't like the bus ... I think it would have been just better not having to travel so far." Despite the explicit valuing of PCET that Elizabeth shared with her family and her peers, she said that a change in the family's financial circumstances meant she was unable to proceed to full time TAFE study. Instead Elizabeth took a part time 18-month traineeship with a business in a nearby town with the intention to "save up some money so I can go back to TAFE." However, in April the following year, before she had completed the traineeship, the business closed down. At our last contact Elizabeth was employed in a casual job in Pieman and attending a TAFE evening class in Macquarie. Realisation of her original aspiration seemed further and further off as the financial resources she needed were not available to her.

It appeared initially that this change in family circumstances had prevented Elizabeth from continuing to full time TAFE study. The family income had been reduced as Elizabeth's father had recently given up his job in order to care for her mother who had been injured in a road accident. Elizabeth may have perceived the need to remain at home to support her family but her reason for not going ahead with her aspiration was couched in financial terms. She described the cost of her proposed TAFE study as "over a thousand dollars," but this appears to be somewhat of an overestimation of actual course fees. The influence of other latent factors may also have been indicated.

Elizabeth had recognised in her first interview that she may need to move away after Year 12 to realise her PCET aspiration “because it’s too far to travel, next year it’ll be right into Macquarie, too far.” However, her close attachment to family and friends in Pieman exerted a strong pressure on her, resulting in her being torn between moving away for study or maintaining close contact with family and friends. At the time of her second interview most of her friends were employed and one had chosen to study part time, a different path to that she intended. Elizabeth also appeared concerned about the costs of travel for post-Year 12 participation. After travelling to school and college on buses provided cost-free, the limited availability of public transport from Pieman to Macquarie and the cost of travelling by private car were also perceived as a deterrent to further participation. She said “It’s hard to catch a bus to go up to town. You’ve got to actually drive yourself, and it’s not cheap.” Despite the suggestion in her first interview responses that “it would’ve been nice to move away” for study, Elizabeth subsequently never spoke about the possibility of moving to Macquarie and studying full time whilst in receipt of Youth Allowance.

Elizabeth may have perceived that it was not appropriate for her to remain a student and be dependent or semi-dependent on her parents but should contribute more financially to the household. However it is unlikely that her part time income would be more than Youth Allowance therefore taking the job was unlikely to allow her to do this. A further possibility is that she made a choice to discontinue full time study in order to maintain contact with family and friends in Pieman.

Sarah was one of two students who were unsuccessful in proceeding directly to post-Year 12 education and training, despite their aspiration. She did not complete Year 12, dropping out of some of her subjects and achieving at the lower level in the others. She had moved to Macquarie in Year 11 to live with one of her older sisters as her parents were moving from the state. Her parents did not appear to be very involved in any of her PCET decisions and she described them as being “happy with whatever I wanted to do... as long as I was happy... if I don’t go to uni. then they don’t mind.” Her infrequent and limited discussions with both older sisters were generally encouraging of her to continue with education and training. Sarah said “I suppose they just wanted me to grow up and go to uni, just ‘cos they hadn’t.” People in Vincent had encouraged her to continue with her education; the school careers

adviser had provided college and career information and her part time work boss was supportive of what she wanted to do and wanted all his young employees “to get to do what they want to do.”

Although making little reference herself to changes needed to adjust to college life, two of Sarah’s college teachers remarked on her difficulties. A Year 11 subject teacher observed Sarah to be a student ‘at risk’ of dropping out of college and made considerable efforts to ensure Sarah remained in the education system. The year ended reasonably successfully for Sarah but the following one was a different story. Again Sarah herself talked little about difficulties. She did refer to disadvantages suffered by rural students generally, such as lack of direct family support and the extra time needed to visit family and thus lost to study. She also mentioned illness and spoke of the accommodations made by her teachers to facilitate her continuing with her studies, the practical support of her peers and the support received from the Rural Student Liaison Officer at Bathurst College. Sarah made little reference to any strategies for dealing with difficulties apart from saying “I just had to soldier on. I went to school (college) most days.” However this was not consistent with the responses of either of the teachers interviewed.

A Year 12 subject teacher reported that after initially perceiving Sarah as a suitable student in the subject area, she turned out to be the opposite. He described her poor attitude to college studies and also some positive aspects of her study behaviour, and concluded “I tried to maintain a positive attitude but she has been a disaster. ... We gave Sarah opportunities to do the right thing, she didn’t take them.” He also referred to Sarah’s peers, one negatively, others positively. He recalled that she had a boyfriend who was still in Vincent but whose visits resulted in Sarah not attending college. Abbott-Chapman, Hughes and Wyld reported similar findings in their discussion of the ‘drop out’ of the ‘missing high flyers,’ especially girls (1991). Sarah’s Year 12 teacher also said

She shared a house with two high flyers, so there were very positive people around her... They tried to contact her to see why she wasn’t at the exam... have tried to keep her on track. It hasn’t been easy. There were a lot of family issues that I’m not aware of that she’s had, ... her personality affects. In spite of all the efforts of everyone around her she was happy to tread the path to

nowhere, was very resistant to being reminded about work commitments, (she) had a very poor attitude to education.

Sarah had obvious difficulties in coping with initial separation from her parents, living more independently and in adjusting to college life. Her commitment to her PCET aspiration appeared to have become a casualty of these difficulties resulting in her lack of success in completing Year 12. At her Phase 3 interview Sarah appeared to still have an aspiration that entailed completing Year 12 and continuing on to a post-Year 12 course at an interstate institution but she did not proceed with it. At a later contact she talked about yet another aspiration at the same institution, but again this never came to fruition. The reality of these aspirations therefore, has to be called into question as she failed to follow on with any of these plans. It is possible that Sarah was referring to aspirations she perceived teachers and researchers expected of her but were not actually held.

Summary of underlying issues for students

The main issues confronting students during their first three or four years of PCET were:

Personal issues

- Moving away from family, friends and the rural community
- Long and tiring daily travel
- Public transport availability and timetabling difficulties
- Accommodation and living independently
- Combining study and part time employment.

Study issues

- Preparation for and adapting to senior secondary college study
- Study success (Year 11/12 results/TE score)
- Study fatigue.

Financial issues

- Cost of post-Year 10 and post-Year 12 education and training
- Cost of living away from home
- Cost of transport for post-Year 12 education and training

- Need for part time employment.

Competing aspirations/demands issues

- Conflicting family/community norms regarding the value of PCET
- Attraction of immediate employment after Year 12
- Non-education and training aspirations.

Uncertainty and/or change issues

- Unclear or changing PCET aspirations
- Change of personal or family circumstances (e.g. health/financial)
- Uncertainty about PCET (e.g. lack of information)
- Concerns about the availability of post-education and training employment.

Students experiencing a straightforward and successful transition from Year 10 to PCET faced little major challenge in continuing with and working to realise PCET aspirations and had no insurmountable financial concerns in doing this. They shared norms that valued PCET with those in their family, the community or both, and subsequently received a high level of assistance in preparing for and coping with changes needed in order to pursue PCET. They showed a high level of commitment to PCET aspirations and were successful in their studies. Overall they took the experience in their stride and there was little need for intervention from family or others during this time.

Students experiencing some difficulties in the transition from Year 10 to PCET faced some change and uncertainty that required parental or other intervention and/or heavy reliance on family or others to maintain their motivation to continue with PCET. They shared norms that valued PCET with someone in their family or community and were committed to their PCET aspirations but this commitment was put to the test by the difficulties they faced.

The students who experienced a limited or less successful transition faced change and uncertainty that impacted on the outcome. The “pull” factor of their community networks and/or the opportunity for paid employment weakened their commitment to their PCET aspirations. Those in students’ networks did not always have expectations that they would be continuing with PCET or were not providing a high

level of assistance for them to continue. Taken together this resulted in a lessening of their commitment to their PCET aspirations.

Regardless of the nature of the students' experiences of PCET, as described above, most students faced competing demands of one kind or another as they progressed from high school through senior secondary college and on to some form of post-Year 12 education and training.

Reconciling demands competing with realisation of post-compulsory education and training and career aspirations

The design for this research, in particular the purposive nature of the sampling criteria was intended to select a group of students who had planned to pursue PCET at the senior secondary level and beyond. It was expected that students would be anticipating studying for two years at college and, depending upon the course selected, a varying number of years subsequently.

At the first meetings with students in April and May 2003 most expressed their intention to enrol in a university or TAFE course after completing Year 12. Two students planned a Year 13 before continuing to university and three students were unsure at that stage but later in the year indicated their intention to continue with some form of post-Year 12 education and training. All forms of post-Year 12 education and training referred to by students were of a substantial nature, entailing several years of further study after completing college and with few exceptions full time study. The majority of the students were confident or very confident of successfully completing Year 12 and therefore being able to proceed with their aspiration, with only one student not very confident and another unsure of successfully completing Year 12.

Strength of commitment to post-compulsory education and training aspirations and strength of career attachment

The first three or four years of young people's participation in PCET coincides roughly with the later years of adolescence, a period recognised as one of identity development (Cotterell, 1996, p.5). The strength of students' commitment to their PCET aspirations was partly based on their perception that continuing to senior secondary studies was an important element of their developing identity and they

valued their college years for “gaining experience” or “growing up” or, in Marjorie’s words, as “a time when you find yourself.” Students closely linked themselves and their future with participation in PCET generally, with ongoing learning, or with a specific career that required PCET. Many students’ responses showed that they perceived their future to be one where they would be following vocational interests and intellectual or subject interests that led more or less seamlessly to one or more careers for which entry required PCET. The following quotes illustrate.

It was always my idea that I was going to do that, that was my dream as a kid, to go to university and do something that I’d enjoy, something that I’ve always wanted to do. ... I’m interested in getting a better understanding of the world (Scott).

I’m continuing to college to follow my interest in Maths. I enjoy learning (Andrew).

While I was growing up I did a lot of fishing... I liked it and this affected my work experience choices (Simon).

I have always been interested in a career in the health area (Helena).

I was most interested in Dance and Drama of all my school subjects. I thought I would go on to college. ... I was really impressed (with Bathurst College teacher/students’ performance) thought I’d have to try it, thought it was achievable too (Bronwen).

I’ve wanted to do Psychology since Grade 9, then this year when I was thinking of how to use Psychology in a career, I thought of teaching (Erica).

I got information about uni. courses, TAFE courses and apprenticeships that interested me, looked at what I would like to do, what I could get into with my marks, especially exam marks, picked several that I’d see myself doing, that I could get a job in (Richard).

Following vocational, intellectual or subject interests served as a strong motivator and heightened students’ commitment to their PCET aspirations.

At the time of the first interview, when students were part way through Year 12, all had demonstrated their commitment to PCET aspirations by their almost two years of participation at the senior secondary level. Students placed a high value on a good performance in their senior secondary college studies and this was linked to their

intention to continue further with PCET (e.g. to get into university (4 students), for career reasons (3 students), for future or job reasons (3 students), to go far or further (3 students). Students' commitment to PCET aspirations was based on their valuing of participation in PCET principally for employment-related reasons and very few students did not mention the relationship between PCET and employment. Students especially referred to the link between a PCET qualification and the sort of employment or career in which they were interested or with employment that they perceived as superior in some way (e.g. well-paid, secure, continuous, interesting) or with better employment prospects or choice.

After completing Year 12 the majority of the students still intended, in 2004, to enrol full time in a university or a TAFE course. A few planned a Year 13 or a year off before continuing to university and two students planned other post-Year 12 study or part time study combined with full time employment. The students' continued commitment to PCET was put to the test in some cases by other factors that placed demands on them and that were in direct competition with realising their original PCET aspirations and resulted in their different experiences of the initial years of PCET, as described earlier in the Chapter.

Anna was an example of students who faced some issues in persisting with post-Year 12 education and training aspirations. She aspired to a career as a lawyer but her parents were unsure whether they were able to meet the considerable costs of her post-Year 12 education and training. Anna's commitment to her aspiration was such that she remained confident of succeeding with it eventually whilst sharing her parents' financial concerns. Anna and her family's high valuing of PCET resulted in a search for strategies to meet the financial obligations attached to her university participation. She said "I may take a year off to work full time to get funds to go to uni." Anna had also anticipated further challenge associated with persisting with her PCET aspirations - the possibility that later she might need to move into the city. She said "I'm not sure if I can afford it, I may have to get part time work (whilst studying at university)." Although Anna was ineligible for Youth Allowance the family was not affluent; she described her family as finding local economic conditions "getting tighter" and needing to make changes in their farming practice because of this.

Anna perceived that her family had played a principal role in assisting her to persist with her PCET aspirations by providing both financial and emotional support. She said at her one of the later contacts "My parents are currently paying my rent at the moment to allow me to live in Macquarie." Responses indicated her prime concern after completing Year 12 had been whether continuing studies at university would be "a financial burden to my family" and if so, whether that burden was too large to consider going to university. She did not want to be a burden to her family, whilst recognising that "schooling is expensive." Although saying, "I have been quite certain that I did want to continue studying," she qualified this with the rider, "but only if I wasn't going against my parents' wishes." Her commitment to her post-Year 12 education and training aspiration was strong enough for her to contemplate both full time employment for a period prior to beginning university study and also part time employment whilst studying in order to realise her aspiration.

Anna's commitment to her PCET aspiration had been cemented by early and detailed discussion with her parents about the benefits she would gain from university participation, and about a personally suitable career choice. The depth and quality of the discussion lessened the likelihood of her commitment wavering, despite the family's difficult financial circumstances. Anna was thus reassured and certain that university participation was what her parents wanted for her.

Most students, like Anna, showed a strong attachment to a particular career and an accompanying commitment to the PCET that was required in order to enter that career (e.g. Nadine, Narelle, Bronwen) or were strongly committed to PCET participation generally because of a particular intellectual or subject interest (e.g. Andrew, Helena, Melanie). By contrast, Sarah's commitment to her PCET aspiration was less solid, as alluded to in the earlier discussion of her limited experience of PCET. She had withdrawn from college part-way through Year 11, returning the following year when a friend also enrolled. Her original aspiration had been discarded and her new choice appeared to have been influenced by what her friends were doing. She said

All of my friends were in, like doing entertainment things, and drama ... and just hanging around them and realising that they were cool people to work with, and just how they were always happy ... kind of made me want to work in the industry where things happen and it's busy and still fun.

Her reason for Year 11/12 participation appeared to be centred on being with friends and having fun rather than on working to realise a PCET aspiration of her own. At the end of Year 12, another student, Marjorie, had reduced her commitment to her original PCET aspiration, by giving priority to a non-education aspiration. She did not proceed to a post-Year 12 education and training course but because she had successfully completed Year 12 she left open the possibility that she could return to education and training at a later date.

Most students had a family member who had shown an interest in their school achievement, had become involved in the development of their PCET aspirations or showed interest their PCET choice. These expressions of interest strengthened students' commitment to their PCET aspirations by conveying a high valuing of education and training and this is the subject of the next section of the chapter.

Strength of family expectations and values regarding post-compulsory education and training

The discussion so far gives some indication of the wide variety of careers to which students were attracted. They aspired to careers in teaching, nursing, pharmacy, medicine, marketing, counselling, as an engineer, lawyer/barrister, scientist, dietician and psychologist. There was also interest in travel and tourism careers, youth community work, missionary work, and the performing arts and aquaculture industries. Students had been encouraged to, or at least not discouraged from following their interests and being ambitious. Elizabeth's mother said "I always encouraged her to have high expectations" and Anna referred to her grandmother "encouraging me to aim high." Bronwen's school subject teacher noted "Her Mum's been a very important influence. She's a very strong woman and fostered in Bronwen the idea that you can achieve anything." Erica herself expressed the view that there was a wide range of career possibilities, saying "We live in a society where you can achieve goals. Students can do whatever they want."

Many students had developed their aspiration to continue with PCET in a family environment where continuing to college was considered as expected or usual behaviour, as the next step in their education. Family norms regarding the value of PCET were shared by students. For instance, David said in his first interview "I always realised I needed to and wanted to go on to college. I did well at school and

didn't think otherwise." He referred to his family's views in his second interview saying "It's always been thought that you always continue to college in our family." Nadine perceived that her entire family thought she should be continuing with her education and training and that it was expected that she had a university education. She said of her older siblings "They all enjoyed Argyle College and uni. and think I should do the same" and "Nan thinks continuing and uni. education is good." It was evident that Nadine was well aware of, and shared her family's high level of valuing of PCET. She said "My family wanted me to go on with my education, but I didn't mind, I wanted to go on." She valued PCET for both vocational and intellectual interest reasons "so that you have a greater choice of job and career ... it's great, you can learn a variety of things."

The family provided role models who had participated or were participating in PCET. Nadine said "All of my family are, like, academic" and noted especially the influence of her older siblings' participation "I suppose just the fact that they were all doing it, that I just wanted to do it too." Her father and older siblings were clearly and frequently articulating the appropriateness and value of PCET participation for Nadine. Her father said "I always thought it was important to encourage her to work to her potential." Nadine's older sister referred to

talking about the positive experiences regularly, almost daily. The nice atmosphere at uni., how interesting classes are, the difference in cultures between school and college and uni. It helped her that I paved the way.

Nadine's older siblings were the source of much information, advice and study support and in addition she was able to move to the city to live with them. Her aspiration to complete a Bachelor of Science and then pursue a career as a zoologist had been influenced directly by her exposure to university course content through one of her brothers. She said "What my brother was doing (in B.Sc. course) looked interesting."

A factor that heightened many students' commitment to their PCET aspirations was family regret over non-participation at that level and the passing on of this regret to the student. A surprisingly large proportion of the students had a parent, older sibling, other family member or more than one individual who had expressed such

regret over their own and/or a sibling's non-participation. Only seven students had not been influenced by this. Elizabeth, for example, revealed that her mother influenced her aspirations "by just saying she regretted not going on" and Melanie, Scott, Taylor and Craig were among the other students spoke about similar parental influence. Again family norms regarding the value of PCET, although from a different base, were shared by students.

Family members passed on their regret in a number of different ways. Some clearly wished the student would benefit from hearing of their experience, for example Jenny said her mother "hoped I wouldn't make the same mistake as she did." Others engaged in discussion that centred on their regret and the need to participation (e.g. Elizabeth) and still others discussed the student's participation and aspirations in greater detail (e.g. Melanie, Taylor). Sometimes regret was not directly passed on to the student but nevertheless had an impact on the student's commitment to PCET. Edward did not refer to his father's regret and, nor did his mother, but this regret prompted Edward's father's action in assisting his son to develop his career aspirations and facilitate PCET participation. A family friend (whom Edward had nominated as encouraging him to continue and had recognised as a useful source of career information and advice) said "He (Edward's father) came to me asking about work, (about) giving Edward an informal understanding of the managerial side of the business... His father spent his life doing manual labour, said he didn't want his son doing the same."

These different approaches appeared to vary in their effect, and some families had a greater impact on students' own valuing of and commitment to PCET. Taylor and Melanie both had families who engaged in frequent, detailed discussion of their regret and the student's participation. Melanie said her mother was an important influence on her PCET choices saying

She encouraged me to go for it because she really regretted not going on. She rates education highly. ... She says she could have gone much further in her job if she'd had more education. ... They (parents) just recommended that I go to uni. because they didn't and, you know, said there's heaps of benefits from furthering my education. They certainly supported me when I tried out for a lot of Drama stuff (auditioning for interstate university courses).

Melanie's parents' comments illustrate their high valuing of PCET. Melanie's father perceived it was essential that she continued with PCET describing it as "an essential part of life in the twenty-first century." Her mother said

I work with people who have had tertiary education. They have more interesting work, more options, (more) choices. I think tertiary education teaches people to think more clearly.

Andrew, by contrast, was developing his PCET aspirations in an environment characterised by conflicting norms and values and differing opinions. He said "I would like to do Engineering at uni." but also revealed that whilst his mother approved of his continuing with his education and training "she believes that I should be placing greater emphasis on ... (religious teaching)." Andrew's older brothers' views about his continuing with PCET were aligned with his rather than those of his mother. He said "They suggested I take up the uni. option if I can." These older siblings appeared to recognise the possible pressure from family and people in the religious group that would discourage Andrew's university participation. Andrew's decision as reported in his first interview was in accordance with his mother's and community group's norms, values and visions. He said "because of (religious beliefs) I will probably lean towards the first option (employment and part time study)."

Andrew's university aspiration had been encouraged by the Pieman School, though the Principal and his class teacher had both voiced concern about Andrew's eventual decision because of the influence of people in his family and community group networks. The Principal said "there will be a dilemma because of his ... (religious) beliefs," mentioning that "maybe his family is not encouraging his best option," and that "the (name of religious group) community give lesser encouragement to pursue academia." Andrew's class teacher said "I'm quite concerned for Andrew about this other stuff (his religious beliefs). It will make it harder for him to decide to go on after Year 12. It will be easier to say, I won't go on." Andrew himself perceived a clash between his family's expectations which were shared by the religious group to which he and his family belonged and those of the school, recalling feeling under pressure "to go to uni. when it was not my first choice. I was dux of the school so they expected me to."

Family and community group expectations had resulted in Andrew's original PCET aspiration being revised to focus more on immediate realisation of his other personal and religious aspirations and perceived obligations. Later in Andrew's first interview a third PCET option, employment with an apprenticeship, also appeared as a possibility. Andrew said his mother "suggested doing TAFE with an apprenticeship and job," his older brothers "suggest TAFE as my first option," and extended family members "all suggest TAFE." The TAFE option was attractive to Andrew as it would satisfy a personal goal to support his mother and the religious organisation to which he belonged whilst also progressing his PCET aspirations. Andrew was experiencing a strong pull from local factors, embodied in family and community group members. This appeared to be a stronger influence than community factors emanating from those in his school and college networks who were encouraging Andrew towards university studies, and was a considerable influence on his eventual PCET outcome.

The high valuing of PCET and encouragement of students to continue to college and beyond was not characteristic of all families and some did not appear to value participation in PCET above other options. A number of students reported their parents left the decision to them and would be "happy" or supportive of whatever their choice (e.g. Amy, Georgina, Simon, Sarah, Erica). These differing levels of family valuing of participation in PCET resulted in students receiving varying degrees of encouragement to realise their PCET aspirations. Where the family valued participation highly the student was strongly encouraged to persist with PCET aspirations whereas in families who were ambivalent about the value of PCET participation, encouragement although evident was less prominent. A small number of families appeared to provide little in the way of encouragement though students still perceived they had received some. For instance Joanna said of her father "He's the one who's encouraged me" although a later response indicated the encouragement appeared more as pressure or an ultimatum - "Dad said I'd better find a job if I wasn't going to college."

The above sections contained a discussion of "push" factors that were influencing most students to continue with PCET - the strength of their commitment to PCET aspirations and the strength of their own and their families' valuing of PCET and expectations regarding participation. However, other factors were operating that

served to discourage some students from PCET participation and influence them to remain in or return to the rural community.

Strength of attachment to family, peers, community and rural locality

Students had varying degrees of attachment to family, peers and others in the rural community. These family and community attachments are part of what is referred to in the literature as a 'sense of place' and 'place attachment'. There is a copious literature on 'place,' 'space,' and 'sense of place,' stemming largely from the work of Tuan (1977). Some recent distinctions made by Vanclay (2008) are useful in understanding students' post-Year 10 experiences; he described place as

'space' imbued with meaning ... and refers more to the meanings that are invested in a location than the physicality of the locality. Sometimes, though, it is the biophysical characteristics that are important in being a foundation for those personal meanings (2008, p.3).

An individual's positive feelings about their local environment and/or community were described as 'place attachment' (Vanclay, 2008, p.8). The data show that most of the students had some degree of place attachment and several had a high degree of place attachment. A 'sense of place' was defined as an individual's connection with the place and to their experience of place which contributes to personal wellbeing, general health and life satisfaction (Vanclay, 2008, p.7 & p.9). A strong sense of place frequently means an individual has high levels of belongingness, rootedness or community connectedness (Vanclay, 2008, p.7). Students varied in terms of their level of belongingness or connection to their rural community. Much of the reason why place and a sense of place take on such importance in human life and experience is because of the mutuality between place and human being that sees place as having a human character, while making human those who live within it (Malpas, 2008).

Previous research has shown showed the importance of place and geography in the identities of young people in one small Tasmanian rural town and how this gave focus to their later lives (Wieranga, 1999; 2001). Stokes and Tyler (2002) also found rural Victorian students had a strong sense of belongingness. Students' place attachment or strong sense of place or a feeling of belonging to their rural community was a factor with potential to influence the development and realisation of their PCET aspirations. It is possible that students' positive feelings about and connectedness to the rural

community in which they have lived or are living may be of such importance to them that they suppress any PCET aspirations that entail leaving that place or community. A more likely scenario is that students' attachment to the rural locality or community will exert some pressure or have some impact on their commitment to their PCET aspirations and thus the realisation of those aspirations. The influence of students' place attachment and sense of place on the development of their PCET aspirations in most instances was minor primarily as a result of the strength of their commitment to their PCET aspirations, their career attachment and their own and their family's expectations of PCET participation, though some did experience a level of tension. Few students developed aspirations that centred on remaining in the rural community and few referred to major issues in moving away either for senior secondary or post-Year 12 study. However separating from family and friends was an issue for some affecting the realisation of post-Year 12 aspirations as a result of their modification or abandonment of aspirations.

The majority of students had a close attachment to their home and family, with two indicating closeness to family only and one student saying his family was not a close one. The need for students to separate from their family and to begin living independently, or more independently, in order to realise their PCET aspiration was potentially in competition with the desire to remain in the rural area with family and could place a considerable strain on students with close attachment to their family. Where the student also had regular contact with extended family additional tension was experienced.

Bronwen was an example of students who exhibited signs of strain about separating from her family. Her strong interest in pursuing a dance career, was supported by her family and especially encouraged by high school and college teachers. These factors combined to ensure that she did move away to study at senior secondary college; a big change as Bronwen intimated "I've always lived in the same house and I've gone to the same school and known the same people." The move took her out of range of many visits from her family and friends, although she did have extended family in Macquarie, with whom she lived initially. Aunts and uncles there also were a source of local knowledge about appropriate areas to look for her own accommodation and provided encouragement and support for her college studies by attending her drama performances in place of her parents. Nevertheless, Bronwen

referred to a downside of Year 11/12 studies, saying “it was pretty hard especially in Year 11. I found it hard.” She did receive crucial family support from a distance, referring to relying on her mother to provide information and emotional support. She said “I reckon I spoke to Mum every single night on the ‘phone for all of Year 11.”

Bronwen’s academic experience was very positive; she was successful in gaining a place at an interstate university but deferred her place for a year. This was partly in order to save money to fund her tertiary studies but also because she was experiencing difficulties associated with leaving her family. The separation from her family whilst at senior secondary college and her close ties with family, home and the rural community exerted a strong pressure that she was unable to ignore. She recalled

I realised after Year 12, especially, like, I had my last exam in the morning and that afternoon I realised I hadn’t been home for about three months, and I thought, that’s just ridiculous, ‘cos then I’ll just have Christmas and leave, and wouldn’t be home for, till the semester break. So I just thought, it’s not, like, it’s going into something harder and further away, so I wanted to spend more time at home.

During her year off Bronwen received encouragement to persist with her original aspiration. She said

It was a better idea than I thought to have a year off, a lot has happened, ... starting to work here ... (with a performing arts company) they’ve encouraged me to do more things and keep on taking classes ... for this year, to keep on top of it.

Bronwen’s father also took her to visit the interstate university and this heightened her confidence of realising her aspiration as she discovered that accommodation expenses and travelling would not be as onerous as expected.

Like several other students (e.g. Helena, Craig and Edward), Bronwen was challenged by the competing demands of wanting to pursue and realise her PCET aspiration and of a reluctance to leave her family and home. The support and encouragement of her family, school and college teachers and others in the performing arts community for her to persist with her aspiration combined with much practical assistance along the way enabled Bronwen to reconcile these

competing demands and she moved to Victoria the following year to resume her PCET.

The need to separate from friends to continue with PCET also placed competing demands on students. The combined structure of rural high schools (described in Chapter 2) aggravated these demands as student friendships were likely to be of a long-standing nature. Most students had close attachments to friends in the rural area, many of whom were continuing to college but after Year 12 most were facing the prospect of less contact with friends.

Many of the students had, like Bronwen, lived in the same house, either for their entire lives or since a young age, or had always lived in the same community. This high level of residential stability enabled students to form long-standing and close relationships with others in the rural community and these relationships were mentioned in interview responses. For example, Melanie's mother said "Melanie has gone to Argyle College with friends who were in the crèche with her. (She) has had the same close friends" and her father described her relationships with friends as "very good relationships, they'd done drama together, were a pretty established group." Such friendships may exert a strong pressure on a young person and influence their career and future decision making. The majority of students reported such close attachments themselves and some noted other students who were affected by such close attachments. For instance, David remarked "I think it can be hard for a lot of students. Just 'cos their whole base is down in Pieman." Simon's college subject teacher also noted negative effects associated with student's close attachments. She said "If something better is happening at home they're gone (e.g. a boyfriend or girlfriend, drugs, work cutting wood, a fishing trip)."

Students' relationships with others in the community were shown through informal and formal links. For instance, Anna said "it's a small country town. Everyone knows each other" and Edward, although living away from home still went home at weekends to enjoy recreational activities with friends. Craig and Erica were among the many students whose relationships with others included those through community groups both in the past and currently. Craig said

I have lots of friends there including teachers from high school. I went to playgroup, played soccer. ... I support the Youth Group in Gardiner, go to activities and events they put on, play at some and I'm in the (name) band.

Erica said "I go home every weekend for work and seeing family and grandparents. I went to playgroup, Brownies, used to play hockey and soccer." Students, such as Amy, Helena, David, Narelle and Melanie recalled having had close attachments to people in the rural area in the past through their membership of one or more community groups.

The interviews with people who had encouraged the students to continue with PCET confirmed that many students had formed close relationships with others at their school and elsewhere in the community. These relationships had different effects on students in terms of their PCET aspirations but effects were mainly positive. For example, Erica's relationships with her friends were perceived by various members of her family as strong and supportive of her and those friends were seen also to have PCET aspirations. Her mother said

They were important in encouraging her. She listens to her friends. They are with her in Years 11/12. Most went on, either to Davey College or Frankland College.

Erica's aunt said "They all seem to support one another. If they're going to college with friends it's easier than if not."

Principals, teachers and careers advisers, many with lengthy experience at the selected schools and therefore having a more comprehensive view of the nature of community networks and relationships, also concurred. Most school staff revealed that in their rural community there were many situations in which young people were able to form relationships with adults. For instance, the Principal of Pieman School stated

More adults are involved with young people here than in an urban area. There's more adult-supervised stuff going on. There's the football club, the Fire Brigade, people like (name) who is starting a Police, Citizens and Youth Club, and the Bowls Club invite students to play. In the last few years the Council has been great.

A similar view was echoed by the careers adviser at Gardiner School who said

There are many opportunities for students and teachers to mix with each other in community groups. Students are much more confident being with adults. (There are) many sporting opportunities, weekend sailing, drama, squash, golf, Scouts, Cadets. Students (also) work on farms with adults.

According to one of Bronwen's college subject teachers who herself had close links with people in the Vincent community, there were people there who were interested in young people and issues associated with young people. She also perceived that groups within the community facilitated development of adolescent-adult relationships, saying "a few key people live up there (Vincent), ex-Department of Education people ... there are ex-teachers doing other things up there."

The existence of such close attachments and students' desire to maintain them had the potential to be in serious competition with students' PCET aspirations. However, most students reported that their friends had continued to college with them so separation from friends was not exerting pressure on them vis-à-vis their Year 11/12 education and training aspirations and by the time post-Year 12 decisions were being made nearly all students were ready to consider a career path that might be different from that of their friends.

Students did not appear to have identified closely with the minority of their rural high school peers who did not continue to college, nor with the larger numbers who did not continue with post-Year 12 education and training, instead perceiving themselves as different from rather than like the majority of their rural high school peers, as illustrated in the following excerpts from interviews.

I don't like the way the local community is heading. The kids at high school now lack motivation, hang around in the streets, etc. (Helena).

I wanted to get away. ... I was not popular at high school, got picked on, maybe because I didn't want to do things they were doing, getting drunk, getting pregnant, drugs, etc. (Jenny).

I looked at the situations of other people I've known, prefer not to go that way (Andrew).

Friends were not an important consideration for the majority of students when making their PCET decisions. Of the three who perceived it was important to have a

job or career near friends, Craig and Richard appeared not to have let this stand in the way of pursuing PCET aspirations away from the rural area. Scott, though not needing to move, also appeared immune from any such pressure initially, perhaps because his friends also had similar aspirations to attend college. However, his aspiration appeared to undergo change after completion of Year 12, as a result of a friend revising her aspirations. A further student, Georgina revealed that her friends were “a bit” of a consideration when she was making her career decision and this later appeared to have had an impact on her change of aspiration. At the completion of Year 12 students’ paths veered in many different directions, rendering competing demands between students’ wanting to pursue PCET aspirations and wanting to maintain rural peer group friendships a more likely occurrence.

Georgina was an example of the students experiencing such competing demands. In her first interview she reported having a close attachment to home and family and this included close links with extended family, her aunt and a cousin. She had a close relationship with her boyfriend and his family and had been a member of several community groups in the past and still had involvement in the Fire Brigade. Georgina had been encouraged to continue with her education after completing Year 10 by people in her family the school and the community and the following comments from her first interview indicated she shared norms regarding the value of PCET with a range of different people.

My mother generally supported my choice. My sister encouraged me to go to Argyle College. She went to Year 11 only, she feels she didn’t have as many options, she regrets dropping out. My aunt told me you have to have an education. The school music teacher ... generally encouraged me to continue to Years 11/12, ... My college CA (Class Adviser) helped me identify strengths, suggested courses I could do. ... The Apex scholarship was good to encourage me. ... I’m fairly motivated but the Pieman Apex Club scholarship encouraged me to do more.”

Georgina was interested in a secure job or career that used her abilities and talents and she planned to enrol in a Youth Work or Small Business Management TAFE course. She anticipated obtaining employment as a Youth Community Worker in Frankland. Some indication of the lack of this type of opportunity locally was evident in her response to a question about the ease of finding employment after finishing her education and training. She said “It depends if I stay in (region around

Pieman) or (region of Tasmania).” This comment also suggested the possibility that she was open to the pull of local factors and may have been considering staying in the Pieman area.

By the end of Year 12 Georgina’s interest in the TAFE courses appeared to have waned and soon after the exams she began employment with a Certificate II Retail traineeship at a café in Pieman. Her plan for the next year, 2005, was to continue her employment at the café and begin a Certificate III Retail traineeship, but she still harboured aspirations to complete a TAFE course saying “I wouldn’t mind going to TAFE, doing Catering Management or Small Business Management.” The terminology suggests there may have been some tension over relinquishing her original aspiration. She had resolved this by abandoning her interest in youth work in a different part of the state in favour of VET courses that enabled her to continue with the local employment that she had obtained. Georgina also mentioned the possibility of articulation to a university Bachelor of Business from the Catering Management or Small Business Management course, again an indication of some tension between her aspirations and what she was actually or most likely to do. When responding to the question about her level of confidence of success with her revised aspirations Georgina introduced the possibility that she would take another traineeship instead of the TAFE course. “If another traineeship came up I would take that, for example an admin. traineeship with (business in Pieman).”

Local factors appeared to have exerted a major influence on Georgina and resulted in the revision of her PCET aspirations. She did not refer to pressure from anyone else in this regard, though at her second interview she did reveal that only a minority of her close friends were still studying (i.e. post-Year 12). It appeared a distinct possibility that by continuing with her education and training outside the Pieman area she would be less able to continue to be involved in social activities with friends. This may have heightened her desire to remain living near close friends including her boyfriend in the Pieman area and for this to have assumed priority in her mind. Additional evidence confirming this was Georgina’s reference to her plans for a three-month holiday with her boyfriend in 2005 - something that would be impossible if she was studying.

Scott was another example of students who experienced competing demands between the need to move away to realise his post-Year 12 aspirations and his desire to remain near his friends. He had developed a firm PCET aspiration earlier than most students, reporting an intention “to go to university” from about the age of nine. During high school this idea was refined further into “doing something Maths/Science related” and by Year 10 his intention was to pursue a Biomedical Science degree. Scott’s family were happy that he was continuing with PCET, because it was what he wanted to do and he had also been encouraged to continue by a class teacher who had provided information. He lived within daily bus travel to college and although describing this as “slightly annoying... not always that much fun” ultimately perceived it as acceptable thus experiencing none of the difficulties of separation from family and friends, or coping with independent living. Nor did he experience difficulty in adjusting to any aspect of senior secondary college study or life. He thought high school had prepared him well for college study and had provided enough information about most aspects, though perceiving less was provided about building a support network and becoming independent. He recalled “I was just keeping going... I was working towards it (his aspiration).”

The reality after completion of Year 12 was somewhat different. Instead of moving to Frankland Scott enrolled in a Geomatics degree at the Macquarie campus of the University of Tasmania. However, at his second interview Scott was wondering whether he should have kept to his original choice but said “I didn’t really want to go up to Frankland... I’m only what, 17, 18 and I wasn’t overly mature. I’m still not now, in my eyes.” He had reservations about moving away from his friends whom he perceived as his family as he was not close to his family, and mentioned one friend who had also planned to enrol in a degree at the Frankland campus of the University of Tasmania but had changed her mind and taken employment in Macquarie instead. His decision appeared to be influenced by the fact that all of his friends were remaining in the rural community and travelling to Macquarie for study or employment.

New friends at university were important in encouraging Scott to complete first year but he referred to further influence of other peers on his plans saying “I’ve seen other people out there, getting jobs and actually seeming to be, you know, happier. Basically they were having a good time and I thought maybe I should’ve in

retrospect, gone out and done work for a year, just sort of get myself started... had something to build on.” Scott did not re-enrol for second year but secured a cadetship position which provided full-time work concurrent with enrolment in a three-year TAFE diploma course. Serious tension over separating from friends had resulted in Scott’s inability to realise his original PCET aspiration. However his alternative choice was another substantial form of PCET.

Most other students’ did not face such competing demands at the completion of Year 12, either because they had few close attachments to people in the community who may influence them against PCET participation (e.g. Nadine) or because those close attachments were less important than their own PCET aspirations which were strongly based on their own and their family’s valuing of PCET (e.g. Claire).

Nadine did not have close attachments to high school friends and, unlike many of the other students, she also did not have a close attachment to the community where she had lived during high school and had happily moved away in Year 11. Although her decision to move had been prompted by the distance and lengthy travelling time between home and college, Nadine also described the town where she lived as “boring” and said “I was lonely there because I’m the last in the family. The others (siblings) had moved out. I don’t know many in (name) because I went to school in Pieman.”

Claire had close attachments to friends in Chatfield but these were not important enough to dissuade her from her PCET aspirations. She had clearly linked her future with participation in PCET and a career outside the rural area. This was evident from her first interview responses even though they also revealed a lack of a firm and focused aspiration as such. She said “I planned right from the beginning, (I) always knew I’d go on after Year 10.” Claire acknowledged that she had been influenced by her mother’s experiences in the workforce saying “I’ve seen my mother having to work really hard trying to raise two kids and give us a private school education.” (Prior to attending Year 10 at Chatfield School she had attended private primary and high schools elsewhere in Tasmania.) Claire went on to outline how her mother had since benefited by participating in PCET. “She has qualifications now, got them in the last four or five years. It got easier.” Claire mother’s norms and values regarding PCET, clearly demonstrated in her behaviour, were shared by her

daughter. Claire said participation was valuable “to get a future, (you) can make a living for yourself, get a job, have money, make a life, have a family.”

While most students reported that their friends were continuing to college with them, and Principals and teachers at each school confirmed that this was the case for the majority of the students, Claire’s future was different from the one that many of her peers including close friends were contemplating. The following excerpt from her Phase 3 interview illustrates.

None of my friends came here (college) or anything, so. I just did it myself. ... They were like still there, getting a job, ... working on fish farms and that and I’m now out there furthering my education, and I’m just stirring them a bit ... I wanted to get them all to come to college with me, but... We all did the same courses, we all did the same subjects, but they just had different goals, (laughter) they didn’t have any goals (laughter) in other words. They didn’t want to be a, a pilot when they were older, they didn’t want to be this or that. They were just happy to settle.

Claire may have differed from her peers in that she had a family that were very much in favour of her continuing with her education after Year 10. She nominated her mother and grandmother as people who had encouraged her to continue. She described her mother as “totally for it, very supportive,” mentioning especially her mother’s additional support during a period of illness in Year 12. She said her older brother verbally reinforced the need to continue, gave her useful advice, and was also an important role model. Claire’s grandmother’s encouragement was of a very practical form. She had taken Claire to visit Campbell College and helped her find accommodation in Macquarie. Claire recalled the school-organised orientation trip to Bathurst College (the neighbourhood college) as “putting me off going to a college” principally as a result of the behaviour of some students already attending. Claire’s grandmother’s assistance showed her that it was possible to find an alternative college that was acceptable to her. Claire’s family’s support for her PCET aspirations assisted her to resist local pull factors such as peers who were not planning to continue.

The pull of a close attachment to the rural community generally or to the rural locality was in competition with some students’ desire to pursue PCET aspirations which necessitated moving away. This was related to their place attachment and

strong sense of place discussed at the beginning of this section. At the commencement of the research about half of the students had moved away from home to study at senior secondary college and several others faced this prospect in order to continue with post-Year 12 education and training. Only about one third of the students appeared able to proceed further without relocating. The need to relocate to an unknown and unfamiliar city clashed with some students' desire to remain in the known and familiar rural area and this was especially challenging because, as already mentioned, most students had a background of residential stability, having never lived anywhere else and several had a strong attachment to the rural community.

Students varied in their response to having to move away. A few were pulled by local factors and clearly wished to maintain the familiar in terms of their current location but said the Year 11/12 subjects they wanted were not available locally (e.g. Bronwen, Craig). Several who had moved made frequent trips home (e.g. Craig, Marjorie, Edward, Erica). Some appeared to be delaying the move until after Year 12 (e.g. Anna, Simon, Elizabeth, Taylor). Some students intimated that there was a possibility of them returning to the rural community after completing their course, indicative of a high level of place attachment and/or strong sense of place. Craig said "I reckon I'll go back to the country as soon as I get out of uni.," and Edward was seeking a career choice that left him the option of moving back to Vincent after completing. In these cases there were some temporary tensions whilst studying away from home. The pull of wanting to remain locally after completing college appeared to be a strong one for Amy. In discussing her decision not to proceed to university study away from home but instead take employment in Macquarie she said "I'm happy where I am now, like living in Pieman, just out of it. I don't think that I've got a great desire to move away at the moment 'cos where I am is quite stable."

Other students appeared to be encouraged to continue with PCET by local factors and expressed a desire to move away. They were amenable to "a change of scenery" (Joanna) or more enthusiastic about leaving like Scott who said "If you've lived there all your life you might have had enough, as most people have... are more likely to want to get out, so for me that was sort of motivation, you know, to get out and do something, get away from the area."

Some students relished the opportunity to become independent and develop confidence in their own abilities saying “Being more independent (i.e. leaving and living in Macquarie) I think helps to be able to deal with making decisions all by yourself” (Nadine) or “I think that’s the best way to go (moving away). It makes you grow up ... you learn things, learn how to be independent” (Claire). Some students were assisted by the supportive environment provided by moving to family-based boarding accommodation previously used by an older sibling (Erica), by moving in with older siblings or extended family (Nadine, Sarah, Marjorie, Lisa, Bronwen) or with slightly older friends (David). Most of those who did face competing demands between their desire to move to continue with PCET and their desire to remain in the rural area received support and assistance to cope with the changes and uncertainties that were required to do this. Family and others in students’ personal networks thus enabled students to reconcile the competing demands.

Erica was an example of students who appeared to face few competing demands in moving away from Gardiner despite living there all her life. Erica’s mother referred to her daughter’s perception of moving away to college as “a big adventure.” Erica did have close attachments to family and friends there but was able to maintain these friendships during Years 11/12 by travelling home every weekend. This was made possible by financial assistance from her parents; Erica spoke of relying on her family “for car registration and insurance, the big payments that I find hard to budget for.” Her path to independent living was a gradual one, as she moved to the city to board with a family she described as having become family friends because her older brother had lived with them when attending college, and her brother helped mediate any tensions she had regarding this first separation. She recalled

It was just good to talk to him, like, um, he, ‘cos he’d been through the same situation, as, like moving out of home, um, at 16 and living with a family that you didn’t really know.

She said of her separation from home and family

It was sort of a bit hard at the start, but I thought Mum was only a ‘phone call away and I was with a family for the first year so it wasn’t like I was just completely out on my own, I was in a family environment still. It was maybe in Year 12 when I was living on my own that I got a bit lonely, maybe, just being on my own... (but) I wanted a bit more independence, a bit more freedom.

She described her family as “always really supportive” and said “I talk to Mum on the ‘phone nearly every day.” She spoke of her family as “a major support factor in my life.” Clearly they were important in minimising any tension she might have experienced between having to move away to the unfamiliar urban area to realise her PCET aspiration and her desire to remain in the familiar rural area.

Despite many students having close attachments to family and friends and the rural community, few students were found to have faced difficulty in reconciling the competing demands between their desire to realise PCET aspirations and a desire to remain locally in close contact with those family and friends. This appeared to be partly attributable to the efforts of very encouraging families, especially parents who assisted students to cope with the changes and challenges they faced when moving away and who could be relied on for the all-important emotional support and sometimes additional financial and practical support they needed. The fact that most people in students’ school and community networks were advocating or encouraging them to pursue PCET also limited the impact of these competing demands. Finally the fact that the majority of all rural students had accepted that there was a need for continuing their education at senior secondary college and only a minority were not doing this, meant that most students had not separated from friends. However, in a small number of cases the pull of local factors such as separation from friends was stronger than the students’ desire to pursue their original post-Year 12 aspiration and alternative aspirations were developed.

Counter attraction of local employment and financial independence

The attraction of local employment and/or financial independence was another factor that was in competition with students’ commitment to PCET aspirations. Many students referred to others they knew who had discontinued college studies and taken employment. David, for instance said

I know lots of people who hate college (laughter) I’m not sure where they’ve gone, but, um, I reckon quite a few people who’ve dropped out and got jobs that they might not want, but you know see it as a better option than studying. ...Probably because they get paid. They’re doing what they perceive as the same amount of work really, so.

School staff who had been nominated by students to participate in the research, also indicated that many students in the five rural areas typically face these competing demands.

Often if they are offered work, in a local shop for example, whilst at college, they say, it's what I really always wanted to do. Another opportunity presents itself and they take it up (Teacher, Pieman School).

Many (in the community) see Year 11/12 then into the workforce as the first preference (Teacher, Point Hibbs School).

Many would still encourage students to take a job if offered, no matter what the job. It's a common scenario if a student is working part time after school, for example at (name of business) and then is offered a full time job they will take it (Principal, Pieman School).

A further possible competing demand may be the degree to which students may be under pressure, for example from parents, to take up employment immediately after completing Year 12, or to become financially independent sooner than their original aspirations indicated they would. None of the students initially appeared themselves to have been directly attracted to local employment at the expense of their PCET aspirations but several became attracted after completing Year 12 due to the influence of others, either family members or friends, on their decisions.

Realisation of students' aspirations is furthered hampered due to the intertwining of the above factors with the high cost of post-Year 12 education and training and a student's own or their family's aversion to incurring debt in order to participate in such education and training, especially the debt associated with university participation. The financial costs associated with participation in post-Year 12 education and training were perceived by many as considerably higher than those incurred during Years 11/12. Students and families were probably aware of this from the time students developed their PCET aspirations but financial factors may have assumed greater relevance as the time for that participation approached. The benefits perceived to arise from post-Year 12 participation had to be reconciled against the financial costs to be incurred in participating.

There was evidence, hinted at earlier in the discussion, that most of the students and their families accepted that participation in PCET had many benefits, not least in terms of obtaining employment perceived as more desirable. It was not expected therefore that students would be tempted by employment of a more mundane nature. Another factor expected to discourage the students from such temptation was the fact that many students came from families with such an employment background, one that they were loathe to emulate and their families agreed with this stance. About two-thirds of the student participants in this research came from families that could be described as traditionally rural. Both or one of their parents had spent their childhood in a rural area, mostly the rural area in which they were still living, and both or one of their parents currently was working in a rural occupation. This type of family background had an impact on students' PCET aspirations. Some students had been discouraged from following the same or a similar career as their parents, including where this employment would be running the family farm. For instance Anna said "My parents didn't want me to become a farmer." Scott recalled that his father thought continuing with his education was "a good thing so I will get a decent job, not like his." Others were adamant that they wished to avoid the type of employment that their parents had. Marjorie referred to the range of different rural jobs her mother had done as "not the sort of jobs I see myself doing."

In addition to families' general discouragement of local employment and encouragement of PCET participation, the rural high schools were perceived by students to play an important role in inculcating the link between PCET qualifications and better job prospects, as revealed in the following quotes.

They were very encouraging of students continuing past Year 10 (Helena, Pieman School).

They said to keep moving through the (education) system (Craig, Gardiner School).

The advice was to go to college. We all talked to the Liaison Officer individually (Edward, Vincent School).

They have a whole unit, ... a whole lesson each week on looking at different careers. We had open information to look into which career path we wanted ... and get information. ... They said to aim high but to have a backup option (Taylor, Point Hibbs School).

When you go into high school they started to do courses on careers, and where you wanted to go in the future, ... having to do assignments on what you wanted to do and why you wanted to do it and how you were going to do it. ... so it was just a push, through high school (Lisa, Chatfield School).

Although these students appeared well aware of the link between PCET qualifications and improved employment prospects there was some evidence that it could be made more explicit for the wider population of rural students. In response to the question whether there was more that schools could do to encourage students, Claire suggested “Let them (students) know how good it is to have qualifications, about the jobs you can get if you have qualifications, how much money you can earn if you have qualifications.” Providing concrete examples that clearly illustrate the advantages to be gained from PCET participation to rural students is suggested as a means of further encouraging more of them to continue with their education and training.

Only three students appeared interested in a local job and two of these were interested only after completing PCET. Edward was considering as one of his options an aquaculture job in Vincent that would require post-Year 12 qualifications. Craig spoke about the possibility of employment in a rural area when he referred to returning after completing university, although he may have meant any rural area rather than an urban or suburban area. Again the employment he would have been seeking would require post-Year 12 qualifications. Only Andrew appeared to be considering employment not requiring PCET immediately after completing Year 12; his shortlist of options included taking a local job that he had been offered.

By the time of his first interview Andrew appeared to be focusing more on local employment opportunities and had refined his aspiration in a way that had lessened the likelihood of his full time participation in education and training. He had originally been unsure whether he would continue with any PCET but in the intervening months had been considering two options – employment and part time Year 13 study or full time university study - before coming to his current decision. He said “I’ve been offered a job to begin work next year and will do Maths Stage 3 at college as well (a subject unavailable to him in Year 12 due to a timetable clash).

Andrew's interest in taking immediate employment in order to achieve other personal aspirations was in competition with his PCET aspiration. His first interview responses indicated it was very important for him to have an interesting job or career that used his abilities and talents and that job security was important - all suggesting that his interest and intention was far from taking just any job. The influence of his older brothers' employment experiences on his views attest to this and is illustrated in the following extract from his second interview.

My two eldest brothers, they did an apprenticeship through (name) in Pieman, and, I mean they enjoyed it very much but they really suggested that I go for something where I could use my mind because they felt that they were probably used a little bit. They weren't happy, well they appreciated the money they were earning, but they said, don't even think about it. They struggled for many years, just budgeting, just getting by. This is ten years down the track and they've just sort of caught up with things, so they suggested doing my very best ...so that I can get a good job.

However, Andrew also stated that a job or career near his family was important "if possible" and "definitely in ... (region around Pieman)." This was an indication of competing demands between the type of employment he wanted and where he preferred the job to be located. The strong pressure Andrew felt to take local employment resulted in his expressing a willingness to take a job that did not use even his Year 11/12 qualifications. He recognised that finding local employment may present difficulties saying "It's harder in (region around Pieman). I might not be able to get a job using my training and education." He said he had been "considering a water operations apprenticeship ... 'cos I would have liked to work in (region around Pieman)." He appeared to be placing higher priority on his desire to remain living and working locally when he said his post-Year 12 plan at that stage was local employment and part time Year 13 study. He had already been offered a job and seemed set to take up that offer.

This was an unexpected response given that the sample of students had been selected against a set of criteria that included an intention to continue with some form of post-Year 12 education and training. The rationale behind Andrew's new choice became apparent later in the interview when he revealed that the main consideration in his career and future decision was "supporting my mother as she is ill. I feel I have to look after her, also supporting (name of religious organisation)." The job offer was

attractive because it would enable Andrew to achieve two other personal aspirations that appeared to be equally important to him as his PCET aspirations per se.

Later responses including his mother's revealed that Andrew was under some pressure over his post-Year 12 education and training aspirations. He perceived that his mother's view was that he should be placing a higher priority on a non-educational aspiration (religious teaching) rather than continuing with further education and training. His mother's comment that "he recognises the fact that he's financially responsible for those around him and therefore needs to have a reasonable income" may have indicated further pressure on Andrew to be earning an income more immediately. Andrew's original preference was to continue with PCET but he was subjected to pressures from his family and the religious organisation to which he belonged to take a local job and remain in the community to meet his obligations to them.

Andrew's mother played an instigating and pivotal role in his obtaining employment after completing Year 12, as revealed in this response.

I was going through the paper and having a look. There was a few different group training organisations that I keep an eye out for because they were the most likely apprenticeships, and I noticed ... towards the back of the employment section, this job, but I just don't know, I didn't really take any notice, (didn't) read it. But Mum made an effort. She reads through the whole lot of them, and she cut it out and said, Andrew, I want you to apply for this one. So I applied for it, and found out a bit more information. It was just the apprenticeship I was after, the type of thing I was after.

Local employment may have become an attractive alternative for Georgina after her close attachment to her peers influenced and led to a lessening of her commitment to realising her original PCET aspiration. This was the subject of discussion in an earlier section of this chapter. In addition to the influence of her close attachments, Georgina may have come to view local employment more favourably as a result of her parents' lesser encouragement of post-Year 12 education and training. Mention has already been made of the encouragement Georgina had received from her family and others to continue to college. However, whilst her parents were keen to see her complete Year 12 successfully, they did not appear especially encouraging of any

post-Year 12 course. She said they thought she should do “whatever I like” and would be “happy with my choice.” Her parents did not appear to share Georgina’s norms regarding the value of post-Year 12 education and training. This may have been because her father had not participated at that level himself and her mother was not employed full time in the occupation related to her university qualification, perhaps because of insufficient local opportunities. However both had jobs in the Pieman area, did not seem to have experienced any unemployment and were the main source of Georgina’s financial support. These last-mentioned realities may have influenced Georgina’s parents’ norms and values and resulted in their less encouraging attitude.

At the time of her second interview Georgina appeared to perceive there were suitable employment opportunities in the rural area - possibly reinforced by her parents’ experiences described above - and that local employment was a definite and easier alternative to travelling from Pieman for further study. She said “People who want to live in the local area would have to look around for a job, it’s easier. The alternative is travelling for uni.” It is also possible that she may have lost interest in further study but even this may have been partly rooted in her desire to remain in the Pieman area near her close friends as suggested in the discussion in a previous section of this chapter. The last telephone contact with Georgina revealed that she had not been able to continue her employment or take up a Certificate III traineeship as planned because the business had closed down. She had a casual job in Pieman and did not mention any further PCET aspirations.

The effect of competing demands on Georgina resulted in her taking employment that compared unfavourably with her original intention. Her participation in PCET had been restricted, with implications for her future. Participation at a fairly low level on the Australian Qualifications Framework, or at less than Certificate III level, has been described as resulting in limited mobility beyond this (Teese, in Richardson & Prior, 2005, p.245). Unless she obtained further VET qualifications, Georgina may be less competitively placed than some other prospective applicants for a position. The fact that the level of VET provision in schools and colleges is “at the low end of what industry wants” (Karmel, 2007, p.114) and as such marks only the beginning of a student’s journey to becoming a valuable participant in the workforce may not be entirely clear to students. Placing further emphasis on this by schools

and college teachers to ensure the message was received would be advantageous for students' careers and futures.

Amy was an example of students who faced underlying pressure on their commitment to original PCET aspirations. In her first interview she stated her plan was to study for a nursing degree in Frankland and she expressed a view that a career enabling travel was important to her. She anticipated that her first job would be close to home saying "I'll probably start off in Tasmania" but also indicating an interest in employment elsewhere. This was later confirmed in her comment that "the Bachelor of Nursing is recognised around the world." Her parents' contrasting views were suggested in her first interview responses. She said of her father "he's happy, it's my choice (Years 11/12) but he's happy with it" but then said that "not much was said about (post-Year 12), (it was) not discussed much" and that her mother was "a bit worried because I have to go to Frankland but thinks it's a good choice because of the job opportunities." This was in contrast with all other students whose families did not express any reservations about their post-Year 12 aspirations.

Amy's aspiration had been influenced by her mother's and older brother's work experiences. She said "Mum never had a secure job so I'd like to have that. I'd like to have continuous work, my brother hasn't." A nursing career was perhaps deemed by Amy to reduce the likelihood of either of these. However her second interview responses reflected the competing demands she faced between her commitment to pursuing a nursing degree and her parents' views about her post-Year 12 activity. Rather than assisting her to pursue her PCET aspirations, Amy said her parents "helped me apply for jobs." After an absence of any overt encouragement to participate in post-Year 12 education and training this assistance reveals much about Amy's parents' norms regarding the value of PCET, and may have been a covert form of pressure that was exerted on Amy or that was perceived by Amy. Although family pressure to relinquish her original aspirations was not mentioned in her interview responses, another student referred to this. Helena, a close friend of Amy, said "Amy wanted to go to Frankland and her parents said no we can't afford it. ... So that probably influenced Amy a lot, so."

However Amy was eligible for government financial assistance and it may have been possible for her to attend university without relying on her parents for financial

support (as several other students, for example Bronwen, did). This suggests that Amy's commitment to her original PCET aspiration was also affected by other factors. Her reluctance to move away and an aversion to incurring the debt associated with university participation were evident in her responses in her second interview.

I would have had to move to Frankland for three years, which I didn't particularly want to do at that stage. 'Cos it is a big move, um, living by yourself, or with other people there. I thought, for me that was too big a move at the moment. ... The way I see it at the moment I can go and do Nursing, and get covered in HECS fees, or I can do my traineeship and get paid at the same time, and I'm still getting qualifications. And I am quite enjoying what I'm doing at the moment.

These responses suggested that Amy was more interested in the immediate returns from employment, the avoidance of HECS debt and perhaps the need or desire to become financially independent from her parents. She also referred to the influence of peers and of study fatigue on her views.

I basically think I'm in a good spot at the moment. A lot of people that I've talked to that are going to uni. don't enjoy it and they've just found that it's very hard. And I got a bit sick of all the study, and I wanted something different, so I think for me that was the right choice.

Few students faced a clash between realising PCET aspirations and being tempted to take local employment or being pressured by family to do so, though some students mentioned that they knew others who did. David for instance said

I've got friends who are meant to continue the family business. ... A mate of mine's parents earn too much (for his eligibility for Youth Allowance) but they don't want to support him, they don't want to give him money, and he can't live off the part time job, the job that he's got if he moves out, so um, he's in a bit of a predicament.

The availability of local employment opportunities may have had an influence; students generally were of the opinion that such opportunities were limited, either in number, in scope or both. Students from different rural areas had different views about availability of local employment opportunities, with Gardiner being perceived

in the most positive light. However, even there the types of jobs available were not the ones sought by students.

Students were also cognisant of the poorly-paid nature of much local employment, which was noted in Chapter 2 as characteristic of the five communities. Reference has already been made to the influence of Andrew's older brothers' employment experiences in low-paid jobs on his PCET aspirations and to Anna's and Scott's parents' views about the undesirability of employment such as theirs. Other students expressed a desire for well-paid employment; nine students had stated this type of job was a very important, important or pretty important consideration in their career choice. Responses suggested that an aversion to financial difficulties and/or wanting a comfortable lifestyle were the underlying reasons for students' views. For example, Jenny "didn't want to be 'pov' (poor)" and Helena wanted "a top-paying job" and "didn't want to struggle."

Few students were themselves distracted from their original PCET aspirations solely by the availability of local employment (although this was a large part of Helena reason for discontinuing PCET at the completion of Year 12). The cost of post-Year 12 education and training and some students' and families' aversion to accruing debt in order to further participate in PCET did serve as a disincentive to participation and resulted in some students perceiving immediate employment as a more desirable or preferable option. Family pressure appeared mainly responsible for the prioritising of these competing demands.

Summary

The original aspirations of the students to pursue post-Year 12 education and training were in the main realised despite competing demands that had considerable potential to affect the realisation of those aspirations. Factors that served to push students toward developing and realising PCET aspirations included the strength of their commitment to their PCET aspirations and their career attachment, and the strength of family expectations and values regarding education.

Students' commitment to PCET aspirations and their career attachment was both based upon and strengthened by their own and their family's norms that highly valued PCET, especially post-Year 12 education and training. These norms and

values resulted in family expectations that students would be participating in PCET and that students would perceive that such participation was appropriate and possible for them. Such norms and values also increased the likelihood of families providing assistance to the students to reconcile competing demands that threatened the realisation of their aspirations.

In opposition to these push factors there were several that were inclined to discourage students from pursuing and realising PCET aspirations. The principal ones were the strength of students' attachments to family, peers and others in the community and the rural locality, and the counter attraction of employment and financial independence. The students' close attachments to family, long-standing friends in the community and the rural locality created separation tensions when students needed to spend much of their time outside the rural area or move away in order to pursue their PCET; some were rather reluctant to leave. Where students' attachments were to family or community members or both who valued PCET and had expectations that they would be continuing with PCET, there was encouragement and support of such aspirations and assistance to cope with the necessary separation. However less encouragement was extended to those students who had close ties to people who did not appear to value PCET participation so highly.

The counter attraction of employment and financial independence had the potential to be in serious competition with students' PCET aspirations. Despite students' high level of commitment to their original aspirations, the pull of offers of employment, or of available employment opportunities and the concomitant financial independence may have become a temptation that was hard to resist. This may especially be the case when students had already experienced difficulties separating from family, friends and the rural community, or had experienced a challenging or gruelling Year 12 or if the student and his/her family had any financial concerns regarding further education and training participation.

In most instances students perceived that people in their family and community networks, or both, were important in enabling them to continue with PCET and realise their career aspirations rather than prioritise alternatives such as maintaining close contact with family, friends and the rural community or taking immediate

employment and becoming financially independent. However, the situations of students were by no means clear-cut, owing to the inter-relationship and inter-dependence among factors. Individual students were exposed to different combinations of push and pull factors, and the extent of influence and effect of these factors varied. Influence and effect also varied over time with students for instance being pulled strongly by one factor during or at the end of Year 12 and by another a year later. The concept of social capital is useful in unravelling and understanding students' experiences, and will be the concern of the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Theoretical and conceptual analysis of students' social capital

Introduction

The discussion in Chapter 5 has highlighted the role of people in students' family and community networks in encouraging or discouraging their participation in PCET. Students' situations during the initial years of PCET were shown to be of a complex rather than clear-cut nature, as a result of the inter-relationship and inter-dependence among factors that affected and influenced their PCET aspirations and participation. The students were exposed to different combinations of factors that impacted on and sometimes exerted pressure on their PCET aspirations. Expectations of family, school and peers coalesced for some students, whilst conflicting for others. For instance, some felt 'pushed' by parents or extended family to realise their potential and gain a useful qualification by aspiring to and participating in PCET but also perceived pressure to abandon their aspirations by peers who had or were intending to obtain employment immediately after Year 12 and were 'pulled' in another direction. The influence and effect of these factors varied. Some students, for example, were very determined and pushed by intrinsic motivation to realise their aspirations whilst others were distracted or drawn away from original aspirations by the strength of pull factors. Variation of influence and effect was noticeable over time; for example, the influence of peers predominated for some students at the end of Year 10 but had diminished by the end of Year 12.

This research is based on a purposive and positive sample of Tasmanian rural students aiming, at the time of sample selection, to continue participating in urban-based PCET. At the commencement of the research, they had successfully completed Year 11 studies, had begun Year 12 and expressed an intention to proceed to some form of post-Year 12 education and training. The students had attended rural high schools which Department of Education Superintendents and Principals indicated had student achievement levels comparable to urban schools, had good links with the community and had a good record of retention to Year 11 in urban senior secondary colleges.

As outlined in Chapter 5, the students' experiences of the initial years of PCET were of three types

- A straightforward and successful experience (eight students),
- A problematic but ultimately successful experience (ten students), or
- A limited experience (six students).

The data suggest that the majority of the students, unlike many education policy-makers and professional educators, do not interpret their situations as disadvantaged rural students facing barriers to PCET participation. Rather, they perceive themselves as having developed specific or general PCET aspirations and needing to take certain actions to realise those aspirations. Those actions are not perceived as exceptional, but are viewed as choices they have made to realise their aspirations. They perceive that PCET is something to which they can aspire, and that they are prepared to do what it takes to realise their aspirations. They recognise that if they want to participate in PCET in an urban centre then they have to move away and adjust to living independently from family or cope with long daily travel, separate from all or some of their friends, and adapt to senior secondary study and independent learning. Some do recognise that there are difficulties but do not perceive these as an insurmountable barrier or as something that needs extraordinary resources to overcome. A year after the research commenced a minority of the students who initially appeared to interpret their situations as described above had changed their views. By this time they had decided that actions they had previously seen as necessary were no longer appropriate or they were not prepared to take those actions. This change in students' construction of their identity from one characterised by participation in PCET can be ascribed to the importance of other priorities for these students, as discussed in Chapter 5. This finding is consistent with other research findings that personal relationships, wellbeing, lifestyle and leisure took a central focus in young people's lives and began to influence their study and work choices (Stokes and Wyn, 2007).

The data provides strong evidence that social capital available to the students and the underlying networks, norms and trust play a role in assisting students to interpret their situations in the manner described above, and are useful in understanding students' decisions and behaviour during the initial years of PCET.

The students were found to have varying perceptions of, or different levels of awareness of the social capital available in their family and community networks;

varied in their willingness to utilise the social capital available in their networks; and varied in the extent of the networks that they utilised. It is argued that the concept of social capital is useful in understanding many of these variations in students' perceptions and behaviour. Some repetition of students' experiences described in Chapter 5 occurs in this Chapter in order to adequately illustrate their access to social capital.

Students' networks provided them with opportunities to form relationships with people who were more or less useful in promoting, facilitating or supporting their PCET participation. Some had connections with people who, through having a PCET background, were able to provide career and future information, or discuss their own experiences of PCET. Most students' networks included people who may provide relevant knowledge or information, advice or opinion and encouragement or support – but a few students' networks contained people who did not have these resources and/or provided less encouragement or support.

The size or extent of students' networks, although potentially correlated with connecting students to useful resources, did not necessarily have this impact. The quality of the social capital in students' networks was more crucial. Students mentioned many members of their immediate and extended family or close friends in the community in relation to their PCET aspirations. They had nominated them as being important in encouraging them to continue with PCET. Students had spoken about the influential role of their family in the development of their aspirations or as providers of advice or opinion, as sources of emotional support, as helpful in making the transition to living independently or, less frequently, as sources of some types of practical assistance (e.g. providing transport or access to a computer). However, most did not mention them as useful sources of PCET or career knowledge and information, or of study-related practical assistance (e.g. help with school work and homework, assistance with college subject choices, adjusting to senior secondary study and independent learning). Nevertheless, some of the students with less extensive networks, had access to all the resources that they needed and used them effectively.

Social capital in the networks of about half of the students resulted in the socialisation of those students to develop a positive attitude toward school and

education and to expect to participate in PCET. Students from families where parents and/or older siblings had participated at the post-compulsory level, with few exceptions, assumed themselves and/or were assumed by family to be continuing with PCET. Parents' comments reflected this, for example Nadine's father said

She was always good at school work ...I've helped her with getting resources from the Web.

Similarly where family, school or both recognised the student's academic ability and potential there was an expectation that the student would be pursuing university education, as Helena's father's comment illustrates.

We provided a supportive home and encouragement of her studies, the right environment for study, resources, for example upgrading the computer. Since Grade 7 or 8 we have indicated the possibilities. We have always been there. She showed potential.

All of these students completed Year 12 successfully and all but one developed and realised a post-Year 12 education and training aspiration. Social capital in the networks of about two-thirds of the remaining students, or one-third of all the students, facilitated their participation in PCET by enabling them to follow knowledge, subject and intellectual interests or to realise PCET aspirations they had developed themselves. Social capital in the networks of the other four students, or one sixth of all the students, channelled their thinking toward recognising the universal wisdom of, and employment benefits stemming from, participation in PCET.

Students who had one of the two successful outcomes after completing Year 12, as described in Chapter 5 and above,

- had family and community networks containing people whose norms were supportive of PCET participation,
- trusted those in their networks as providers of knowledge or information, advice or opinion and/or of encouragement and support that was useful in assisting them to continue with PCET, and
- utilised the social capital in their networks to facilitate proceeding to a substantial post-Year 12 education and training course, as originally intended or in accordance with a subsequently developed aspiration.

Students who had a straightforward and successful experience had less need for recourse to others in their networks in order to continue with PCET than those with a problematic but ultimately successful experience.

Students who had a limited experience, as outlined above,

- had networks containing people with dissonant norms regarding PCET participation,
- had close relationships with people who did not value PCET, especially post-Year 12 above other activities such as employment,
- trusted the knowledge and information, advice and opinion and encouragement and that support these people provided, and
- utilised social capital in their networks that was less supportive of their PCET aspirations.

The concept of social capital is useful in understanding some of the variations in students' perceptions and behaviour. Some of the complexities and even apparent contradictions in students' situations, summarised at the beginning of this Chapter, may be better understood by an examination of the way in which social capital - social networks, underpinning norms and values and trust - operates in different situations for different students. This chapter, therefore, will discuss these concepts, as they relate to the types of student experiences discussed in Chapter 5.

Social capital resources

The definition of social capital adopted in this thesis was defined in Chapter 3 as “the networks, norms and values in family, school and community that students can draw upon for information, advice, opinion and support for their PCET participation.”

Membership of a durable network of relationships links an individual to social resources that have been separately identified as knowledge resources and identity resources (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000).

Knowledge resources are those where interactions draw on the resource of common understandings related to knowledge of community, personal, individual and collective information which is drawn from sources internal and external to the community” (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000). They include “knowledge of the skills,

knowledge and affective attributes including values of others in the community, of the common physical resources of the community including aspects of place, formal and informal networks, procedures, rules and precedents, internal and external resources and sources of information” (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000, p.99).

Identity resources are those where interactions draw on internal and external resources of common understandings related to personal, individual and collective identities (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000). They “build a sense of ‘belonging’ and encourage participation, as well as providing the framework for people to reorient their views of self and others in order to be ‘willing to act’ in new ways” (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000, p.100). Knowledge and identity resources allow community members to combine their skills and knowledge with the knowledge and skills of others to produce some action or cooperation for the benefit of the community and/or its community members (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000, p.101).

The social capital resources available to these Tasmanian rural students are described in a manner consistent with that of Falk and Kilpatrick but also highlighting the way they are perceived and used by students.

Family and community perceptions of resources available in students’ networks

From the perspective of those in families and the community who had encouraged students to continue with PCET (parents, family friends, school Principals, teachers, careers advisers, others in the community) both knowledge and identity resources as described by Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) were available in each of the five areas.

With regard to knowledge resources, those in the schools perceived that they and their colleagues in the senior secondary colleges had provided students with the necessary information to enable the students to make decisions regarding their participation in PCET. School staff also perceived they were able to and had provided career information and guidance, and had knowledge of individuals to whom students could be referred and of places where students could go for further information. School- and college-based career activities and events and the larger Careers Expos, TAFE Information Evenings and University Open Days were perceived as important sources of information, providing students with the opportunities to broaden and deepen their knowledge of PCET options. Principals,

teachers and careers advisers in schools and colleges were also aware of the knowledge resources residing in some students' families where parents had PCET qualifications, and especially where there were older siblings with recent experience of PCET. Others in the community were also perceived as knowledge resources.

Similarly in terms of identity resources, those in schools and colleges recognised there were several formal groups in their community who were able and willing to act for the benefit of students in the community, including those with PCET aspirations. In Pieman, Chatfield and Vincent there were well-established Centres providing a small but growing range of PCET options, and in Gardiner and Point Hibbs there was limited provision through the school. In Chatfield, school staff and Council officers had formed a group to work toward increasing local opportunities for PCET; after completing a PCET course locally students were encouraged to pursue further opportunities in urban senior secondary colleges. In Pieman and Point Hibbs the school and local businesses combined forces to provide a No-Dole programme aiming to encourage students looking for employment after completing Year 10 to remain in PCET until successful in this, rather than apply for unemployment benefits. In all five areas service clubs such as Apex, Lions and Rotary promoted PCET participation by providing and presenting scholarships and bursaries for continuing students. Similarly local businesses, industries and community groups, such as the Country Women's Association, recognised students' school achievement by donating and presenting prizes.

Individual members of the community also contributed their knowledge and skills to benefit students by their participation in school programmes, providing resources or facilities for student use, by recognising students' achievements, by providing financial assistance, by discouraging absenteeism and by publicising student and school activities and achievements in the local press.

Work experience programmes in all schools were strongly supported by the community. Businesses and individual employers provided work experience places for Year 9, 10 and disaffected students and encouraged work experience students to continue with PCET. Others provided part time employment for students whilst they were studying and often, but not always, encouraged student employees to continue

with education and training. Community members also contributed their knowledge and skills to mentoring programmes at some schools.

Formal and informal connections within the community were seen as knowledge or identity resources. Those nominated as encouraging the students saw there were opportunities for students to meet people who may have information, advice, opinion or support for their PCET aspirations, through participation in community group activities (e.g. Scouts, Guides, Fire Brigade, drama, music and church groups). However, some church groups in the Pieman area were perceived by school staff as “less encouraging of academia.” Students’ families were mentioned as providers of useful resources for students’ continuing participation in PCET, as were family friends, peers’ parents, neighbours and others known to students. Sometimes these people connected the students to options and experiences outside the community.

The non-student participants in this research were of the opinion that community members in all five areas were supportive of young people both generally and in their desire to pursue PCET. Community members were seen to be combining their knowledge and skills and acting cooperatively for the benefit of students.

Students’ awareness of resources available in their networks

The variation in the extent of student consultation with others about their PCET, career and future options and choices, and variation in the extent of encouragement received from others were two of the preliminary findings from the research (Baynes, 2005). These variations were later linked to variations in students’ awareness of resources available, willingness to use available resources and trust of those with helpful or useful resources. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, an important finding was that students differed in their awareness of the level of knowledge and identity resources in their families and communities that may be useful in the pursuit of PCET. Stokes and colleagues (2006) have referred to the possibility that social capital may be evident for only a proportion of the population even though the area appears to demonstrate a high level of social capital. Although most students did perceive that knowledge resources were available in their families and communities, useful resources were perceived as not available in a minority of students’ networks because they did not recognise them or were not aware of them. Resources needed

by some students were clearly absent, or were considered to be either of limited use or inadequate by some students.

Students such as Melanie and Helena saw the local newspaper editor's practice of recognising, promoting and celebrating students' achievements as an encouragement and support resource. Helena said

The Pieman News, if someone from our school does well it'll make the page and quite often in the Pieman News there's articles about kids that have done well. I think they're very supportive.

Melanie nominated the editor as one of the people who had encouraged her to continue with drama studies at the post-compulsory level. Joanna and Scott, on the other hand, did not perceive the community as an encouragement and support resource, saying respectively "it's not their job" and "it's none of their business" to encourage students. The students who had one of the two types of successful experience were more aware of social capital resources in their networks than the students who had a limited experience.

Schools were generally perceived by students as collections of individuals acting cooperatively to encourage students to continue. They were therefore expected by students to provide adequate information about college study and prepare students academically for it. Students reported receiving information about financial assistance available for rural tertiary students, about college subject choices, about the transition to college study, about post-Year 12 education and training opportunities and career information and guidance. Most also perceived there was knowledge of individuals with, and places to go for, more specific or detailed information.

However, a minority of students perceived school knowledge and information resources were inadequate. Amy was an example, expressing disappointment with the information about Year 11/12 subject choices provided by her school, saying "they could have given more about what's involved and required." She also perceived her family were not a source of helpful knowledge and information in this regard, saying that her parents "don't know much about the courses and where they can go and that sort of thing" and that despite her older brother having experience of

PCET they “don’t really talk about that sort of thing.” Simon would have liked more information during high school about university options. Bronwen and several Pieman students referred to being inadequately informed about college pre-tertiary subjects. Taylor, Jenny, Andrew and Nadine were among those students who thought their preparation for college study was not adequate.

School- and college-based career activities and events, Careers Expos, TAFE Information Evenings and University Open Days were seen by students as important sources of information that provided them with the opportunities to extend their knowledge of PCET options. Several placed a heavy reliance on these sources in developing their PCET aspirations, whilst others did not attend these activities and events. The need for students at some schools to make their own arrangements for transport to and from the larger city-based events may have affected students’ attendance. The work experience programme was mentioned positively by most students and particularly well-regarded by almost half of the students for the opportunity provided to increase their career knowledge and information, to ‘taste’ a variety of careers, for the encouragement and inspiration received from people they met during work placements and for advice and opinions received.

Students generally did not mention formal groups in the community (sporting teams, music or church groups) as identity resources, and may or may not have been aware of resources within such groups. An exception was the No-Dole programme recently initiated in Pieman and Point Hibbs, and referred to by a small number of students as an example of community encouragement of student participation in PCET.

Students were aware of some community identity resources associated with the school but overall appeared less aware than those who had encouraged them of the full range of identity resources within their community. This discrepancy is difficult to explain, but noteworthy. It is possible that these resources had no impact on the students personally, because they themselves had not needed them or made use of them, or because they perceived their own motivation was the dominant influence. There were fewer references to the activities of groups acting for the benefit of students and in particular acting collectively to encourage student participation in PCET. Gardiner School students were more aware than students at the other schools of community identity resources. They referred to the useful contribution made by

people representing a range of different occupations and people from a variety of PCET institutions who attended their school Careers Evening which was organised by one of the local service clubs. At the other schools careers events appeared to play a minor role or had less of an impact on students. There were less spontaneous mentions of these events, and when asked about them, many students could not remember about them or recalled not attending. Career planning at these schools appeared to have a lower profile than retention of students to Year 11 but these events may be an important part of encouraging students to continue to senior secondary college. Vincent students mentioned the identity resources of the careers liaison officer, and a small number of Pieman students referred to visiting speakers who provided information about their jobs and the Jobs Pathways Officer who visited schools and colleges. Students at several of the schools mentioned people with whom they came into contact through school/community activities.

Students at all of the schools were aware of one resource available in their community, that of the financial support from service clubs such as Apex, Lions and Rotary who provided scholarships, bursaries and other forms of funding for students who were continuing with PCET. Most were also cognisant of similar support from local industry, small businesses and community groups in the form of prizes for student achievement, many of which were presented personally to students at the schools' end-of-year award ceremonies.

Students were aware of resources available through informal links with people in the community, about half of them having nominated family friends, neighbours, community group friends, employers, slightly older peers and other adult friends as people who had been important in encouraging them to continue with PCET.

About eighty percent of the students perceived that most people in the community were supportive of young people generally and were a useful resource in their desire to pursue PCET. Four qualified their views – saying that although the community was a useful resource, it was disregarded by students generally, or that the community was less important than family or that one person only in the community was a useful resource. Overall, community members were seen to be combining their knowledge and skills and acting cooperatively for the benefit of students.

Students' willingness to use resources available in their networks

A second and notable finding is that students had varying levels of willingness to utilise the social capital available in their networks. Higher levels of willingness were associated with a lack of useful resources in students' family networks, with a connection to people with the needed resources in the community or outside the community and with a level of confidence in asking others for information, advice or opinion. Although most students felt their family were supportive of their PCET participation, about one third of them perceived their family as unable to provide sufficient knowledge and information about specific aspects of participation. However, they were prepared to seek this knowledge and information from others in the community. Bronwen for instance, sought information about senior secondary college and living away from home in Years 11/12, about the college and university courses she needed to complete to realise her aspiration and also detail about the auditioning process for university selection. She recalled

... not having any older brothers or sisters or not really having any friends that were a year or two ahead of me, who went on, I didn't know, like anything to expect at all. So I had, like nothing to start my opinion on, on what I was going to do, and so I had to talk to people and find out what they did. ... I guess there's some parents that you thought, ah, yeah, all their kids have got scholarships and they've been through this before, like they know what to do. When I was trying to find out about Centrelink (government allowances) one of my friends' parents said, oh come round with all the forms and I'll help you fill them out ... so there were people that you could find that had done things before (Bronwen).

Students' contact with individuals in community networks or outside the community who had knowledge or information of interest to them or who were able to talk about relevant PCET or career experiences enabled many to address unmet knowledge and information needs, as well as gain additional encouragement and support for their PCET participation. Students were more willing to utilise the resources of individuals they knew well or had known longer. For example, Anna and Craig referred to being encouraged in their PCET aspirations by "a neighbour who knew me well" and a longstanding family friend respectively. Students were also amenable to receiving information and advice from those whom they knew well and perceived as particularly appropriate sources of information. Melanie had useful discussions with her father's partner about the partner's daughter's PCET experiences. David, Narelle, and Erica all sought information about university study

from friends of their parents who had attended university and Helena mentioned deciding between two different university courses after conversations with a neighbour who had attended university. Those who were well-acquainted with the students used that personal knowledge and familiarity to great effect in making suggestions that were individualised and personal.

Students did utilise resources of those whom they knew less well, usually because they recognised them as sources of authoritative and relevant knowledge, information, advice or opinion. Simon was one of several students who gained much from interactions with those they met on work experience placements. He said

I found out a little bit more in-depth stuff, more on the work experience at the actual uni. in Frankland, ... like I was working one-on-one with a couple of uni. students. I picked their brains a fair bit, found out what everyone's doing, what they did in high school... they'd been there, they've done it, they know what they're doing.

Students with the first two types of experience of initial PCET - a straightforward and successful experience or a problematic but successful experience - were more likely to be willing to utilise resources in community networks than those who had a limited experience. For example, Elizabeth had not discussed her plans with people she described as close friends "because I'm not close with them like I am with family" and Georgina had utilised family resources only, perceiving that people in the community "don't know you so well." Joanna had not discussed her plans with anyone in the community, saying "I don't socialise much in the local community."

As mentioned above, willingness to utilise resources in community networks was also related to students' confidence in asking others for information or assistance and their awareness of the workings of social networks, or reflected students' independence and intrinsic motivation, or a combination of these. Students such as Joanna, Nadine, Amy, David, Narelle and Scott preferred to use their own resources to search for knowledge and information, to make their own decisions rather than ask for opinions and take advice from others and to be independent and self-motivated rather than rely on others for encouragement and support. Most of the students preferring to rely on their own resources lacked a high level of trust of those outside

the family and in the wider community. Students' trust of those in their networks is discussed later in this chapter.

Extent of networks utilised by students

A third finding of considerable importance was that students varied in the extent of the networks which they utilised. Students who were happy to discuss their PCET aspirations with a wide range of people in their family, at school and college, within and outside the community, all had either a successful and straightforward or a problematic but successful experience of PCET. Lisa, Helena, Simon, Bronwen, Melanie, Craig, Erica and Richard were examples. They were in sharp contrast with students who did not talk to anyone outside family, "did not think" to discuss their aspirations with people they knew in other contexts (e.g. through community group involvement), or did not discuss their aspirations with others they knew in the community generally (e.g. Joanna, Georgina, Elizabeth, Narelle). Mostly these latter students had a limited experience in the initial years of PCET.

Again, students' trust of the different people in their networks affected their decision regarding the range and extent of social capital resources that they would access. As before, some were less willing to use the resources of people they did not know well, or knew less well than members of their family and in some instances, teachers at their school or college. However, some of the students such as Nadine, David and Narelle who utilised more limited networks appeared to find all the resources they required within those networks and did not feel a need to utilise wider networks.

Findings suggest that most of the students who had one of the two successful types of experience of initial PCET

- had a high level of awareness of resources available in their networks,
- were more willing to utilise the available resources, and
- utilised a more extensive range of resources.

The firm aspirations of these students or their commitment to continue with PCET and their strong desire to realise their aspirations resulted in heightened perceptions of what constituted encouragement. Their greater willingness to use available resources was related to their self-confidence, a lack of knowledge and information

in family or more accessible networks which heightened their awareness of the need to search elsewhere to find the knowledge and information they needed, or to levels of trust of the individuals in their networks. Their use of an extensive range of resources was related to having a greater number or wider range of connections or to having higher levels of trust of others in the community.

Students' relationships to family and community networks

The student's relationships with those in their family and community networks were examined in order to establish

- the type of relationships that students had with their families and communities,
- whether or not those people were encouraging or discouraging of students' PCET aspirations and participation, and
- the effect of the relationships on the students' PCET aspirations and participation.

Previous research and discussion in the literature was of assistance in this process of examination and in understanding the decisions and behaviour of the students.

Bonding, bridging and linking social capital

Gittell and Vidal (1998) distinguished between two different types of social capital - bonding social capital that brings closer together people who already know each other, and bridging social capital which brings together people or groups who previously did not know each other. Woolcock (1998) identified a third type, linking social capital that connects an individual to people in positions of power. These distinctions have gained wide acceptance in the literature. Woolcock (2000) described an individual's relationships with other people as containing bonding, bridging or linking social capital depending upon whether the other people were like you, not like you, or were in positions of power. He further elaborated bonding social capital in relationships with people in your immediate circle who are important in shaping who you are as a human being and bridging social capital in relationships with other people whom you actively cultivate because they are a crucial part of what it takes to get ahead in life (Woolcock, 2000). Students did have relationships that could be identified as containing bonding and bridging social capital - with people

like themselves (e.g. family, neighbours, friends and close work colleagues), and with unlike people (e.g. from a different socio-economic status and age group). Students' relationships with others at school and college may be conceptualised as containing bridging and linking social capital as those people may be both unlike the students and be in a position of power over them. However, the aspects of the relationships among students and others at school or college of interest in this research are those concerning PCET and career/future opportunities to which teachers and others could connect students rather than those concerning teachers' or others' power over the students, therefore linking social capital in students' relationships is of less relevance in this research.

The bonding-bridging distinction is a useful starting point for the examination of students' relationships at an important time of identity development and career and future decision making. It was helpful for understanding the effect of different people on students' PCET participation. Family socialisation processes may or may not have resulted in students' valuing of education and further led them to expect or not to expect to participate in PCET. Students may or may not be socialised to aspire to a particular or general career or occupation. Students may or may not be expected to carry on a family occupational or employment tradition. Students' relationships with close friends may have been similar influences on their PCET decisions. Conversely, others less like or unlike the students may link them to PCET or career opportunities not available in family and friendship networks. However, as the analysis will reveal, some of the people in students' family and close friendship relationships were important in terms of the student getting ahead (giving them access to bridging social capital) and some of those in students' non-familial relationships were important in shaping who the students were as human beings (giving them access to bonding social capital).

Strong ties and weak ties

As mentioned in the literature review in Chapter 3, the concepts of bonding and bridging social capital have been likened to the strong ties and weak ties discussed by Granovetter (1973). He distinguished between an individual's strong and weak ties in terms of level of investment of time, emotional intensity and intimacy (mutual confiding) and reciprocal services. Higher levels of investment were associated with strong ties and lower levels with weak ties. Granovetter suggested weak ties may be

more important in linking individuals to people in different social groups and to opportunities. Some of the similarities between strong ties and bonding social capital and between weak ties and bridging social capital are clear.

Halpern (2005) reiterated the similarities, noting the role of strong ties for more intense, multi-stranded support that might be expected to play a greater role in emotional well-being and weak ties which are extremely useful to people in terms of getting information, opportunities and jobs and concluded that “different forms of social networks characterised by different forms of personal ties seem to have different advantages and benefits” (2005, p.20).

Granovetter’s typology is useful in understanding the different roles of the readily-recognisable strong and weak ties of student participants in this research. The terminology of strong and weak ties cuts across the like-unlike, kinship-social network differences allowing for recognition of ties as strong or weak regardless of the identity of the student and the other person and of whether or not the relationship between them is familial.

Elements from both typologies are useful in discussing students’ relationships with others. However, there is a tendency for students to be linked to resources of use in pursuing PCET by both bonding and bridging social capital available in their relationships. The finding that bonding networks can provide access to similar resources to those provided by bridging networks has not until recently been prominent in the literature. However, evidence of similarities between strong and loose (weak) ties has been found (Leonard & Onyx, 2003). The study found bonding social capital in both strong and loose ties, and that strong and loose ties generally were in the same networks but the strong ties were more developed than the loose ties. The authors assert that their findings suggest that loose and strong ties are not synonymous with bridging and bonding social capital. They conclude that in general loose and strong ties differ in degree rather than in kind and people generally prefer to bridge through their strong ties (Leonard & Onyx, 2003). Findings of this research support those of earlier studies.

Students' family relationships

As revealed in Chapter 5, most of the students had close relationships with members of their immediate and extended family and these close relationships resulted in the families of two-thirds of the students having a considerable impact on the development of their PCET aspirations. As already mentioned many families had no experience of PCET and their regret over this translated into a high level of encouragement of students' participation as exemplified by these quotations.

There's always been a lot of talk about education in the house, from me especially... My own experience was of very limited education and I've worked in mines since I left school. I understand the importance of education... I saw the need for it, was limited in what I could do. I could have done different things if I'd had education and training (Taylor's father).

I always said I wished I had continued. I left in Year 10... did what my friends did, went to Business College for 12 months then got work. Later on, after children I couldn't go back to the same kind of work, especially living in the country, so I regretted. It's easier if you have certificates, degrees (Erica's mother).

Right through school I spoke to him, encouraged him, said you need education to get a decent job... My own experience was paddock work, hard, manual work. I didn't want him going through the same situation as me (Richard's mother).

The supportive nature of the family networks of the majority of the students gave them access to bonding social capital that was of considerable assistance to them in managing the change to new and unfamiliar surroundings as they moved from the rural community to the city. This confirms findings reported in earlier research, discussed in the social networks section of the literature review in Chapter 3, in which supportive networks were found to be related to the ability to cope effectively with new situations and changed circumstances (Frydenberg, 1997).

Families also provided access to bridging social capital by linking students to others such as family friends or others they knew with knowledge and experience of PCET or the career of interest to the student. Long time family friends were able to advise or give an opinion about the appropriateness or suitability of a particular course or career or could provide encouragement or support that the student found acceptable on the basis of that longstanding friendship. Those with PCET experience helped

students to know what to expect in the course of interest and/or assisted them to adjust to an unfamiliar and different level of education and training.

Students' community relationships

Most of the students were embedded to some degree in community networks whilst attending high school, as the discussion in Chapter 5 shows, and their relationships with others in the community gave them access to both bonding and bridging social capital. For example, Melanie's mother referred to "quite a few" people in the community who were important in encouraging Melanie to continue with PCET, "most of her teachers, parents of her friends, other people she met who congratulated her on things she'd done, said keep it up, etc." Students had consulted with or somehow involved a range of different people in the community in their PCET decisions. Most had discussed their aspirations with close friends of their own age and other peers who lived in the community, drawing on the bonding social capital in those relationships. Close friends' involvement in students' daily activities meant they were perceived as able to offer especially appropriate and relevant information and advice and therefore students perceived them as providing a great deal of understanding and support. Many students relied on close friends for this either solely or in addition to family. Most students mentioned general discussions about PCET aspirations with peers at school and college as a source of ideas and information. After Year 12 students used discussions with new friends in a variety of different education and training settings to the advantage of their PCET aspirations and participation, to share experiences (e.g. Andrew, Amy, Simon), for emotional support (Lisa, Jenny), to assist in adapting to university studies (Anna, Melanie, Erica), and as a source of information and/or ideas (Andrew, Amy, Helena, Simon). This clearly illustrates the dynamic nature of bonding social capital resources (Frank, 2003).

In most instances students' close friends were continuing with PCET after Year 10. This had a positive effect; most students perceived the transition to senior secondary study to be easier when accompanied by friends. Students referred to continuing to college as a group, basing their choice of college on where friends were going or in one case, continuing to college mainly because friends were. However at the end of Year 12 some students' friends appeared more interested in financial independence rather than continuing with PCET and gaining a qualification, or were study fatigued

and chose to take employment rather than continue with . Close attachments to such friends influenced some to reconsider their original PCET aspirations and not proceed to full time study (e.g. Georgina, Elizabeth, Helena).

All except two students had adult friends in the community - family friends, people in community groups to which they belonged, people they knew through part time employment, people they had met through school activities and others they knew in the community such as friends' parents and neighbours. These friendships provided access to bonding social capital, increasing the number of people taking an interest in students' PCET aspirations and enquiring about their progress, all of which students reported finding encouraging. The personal nature of the encouragement from those students knew well, in particular the relevance and appropriateness of many of the suggestions made by those in students' networks with whom students had longstanding relationships was apparent.

Other relationships students had with people in the community provided access to bridging social capital. About half of the students had either discussed their PCET aspirations with, or sought information or advice from one or more adult friends in the community, such as employers (Bronwen, Sarah, Simon), community group friends (Craig, Andrew), family friends (Anna, David, Narelle) or peers' parents (Lisa). Other adult friends assisted students' realisation of PCET aspirations by confirming their ability to achieve their aspirations or the appropriateness of their choice (Anna, Helena). Students' adult friends generally had a positive impact on the students' PCET aspirations and outcomes, but a small number had a discouraging effect, such as Andrew's community group friends who discouraged university studies and Marjorie's family friends and community group friends who were more supportive of her non-education aspiration.

Friendships students had with people in the community served as knowledge resources providing information or links to information that were useful in their pursuit of PCET, or were identity resources who provided students with advice or opinion about career or PCET options, or encouragement to develop and/or realise career or PCET aspirations.

The school or someone at the school was mentioned by most students in relation to the development or realisation of their PCET aspirations. Some students appeared to have a closer relationship with a particular individual. Half of the students had nominated a school teacher, Principal, Assistant Principal or Careers Adviser as being important in encouraging them to continue with PCET, and seven students nominated two or three. Some of the teachers appeared to have invested considerable time and emotional intensity in their discussions with students regarding PCET aspirations, giving students access to bonding social capital as exemplified in the following interview excerpt.

Richard was a little confused about what he might do, where he might go. I stressed he needed to believe in himself and his abilities in order to succeed. The ability was there but we needed to work on his self-esteem. ... Mum was uncertain too, asked for help about him, what he could go on to (Richard's school Principal).

Those in the schools also gave students access to bridging social capital, linking them to different communities, people with different ideas and perspectives and also to further networks, as illustrated in the following quotations.

At one stage I felt he thought that college was not a very nice place and he might not have gone on. ... I talked to him about how it was possible to avoid particular people and situations. ... I felt he needed to know that if you have a goal you have to follow the necessary path to get there. He needed to go through college to get to his end point and might need to disregard things along the way, get over things (Andrew's school class teacher).

I could see she had the skills, said 'go for it' as we all do here, told her to make the most of what she's got, told her she was very competent with English, told her to think about what sort of things she could do with that ... She did step out of her comfort zone that year (Taylor's school subject teacher).

Some of these student-teacher relationships were multiplex relationships, which are further discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Students' references to relationships with college teachers suggested these people were supportive of students' PCET aspirations, assisting those with uncertain, less focused and, in a few instances, unrealistic aspirations to develop firm and appropriate post-Year 12 plans. Georgina, Elizabeth and Joanna were examples of such students. College teachers were also considered by most students to have

assisted them to realise their aspirations, by providing very useful career and post-Year 12 information, valued advice and opinion about their options and, in some instances, of supporting them to cope with change required for senior secondary and further study. For instance, Simon's college subject teacher provided many different types of support as indicated in this excerpt from her interview.

He came to do the aquaculture course but was unsure where he was heading. We looked at the variety of options available... have given him training in areas he wanted, knowledge and skills he wanted and needed, introduced him to the range of work options available, gave him experiences in a variety of these to base his decisions on, choose his route, gave him contacts in the industry (Simon's college subject teacher).

Those in students' school and college networks linked them to others with resources that were useful to them in pursuing PCET. The majority of these links were through school-based or other career activities and events. About seventy percent of students mentioned meeting people through such activities and events, who had provided career or PCET information or had engaged in discussion that yielded advice or opinion about, or support for their PCET aspirations.

Multiplex relationships

About a quarter of the students had relationships with people in the community which were multiplex relationships (Gluckman, 1967 in Coleman, 1988, pp.S108-9) or relationships in which the student was linked to a person in more than one context. In most of these relationships students were linked to teachers or others in the community through both school and community group activities but relationships were also found where students were linked to others in both neighbour and community group contexts and in both employment and community group contexts. Multiplex relationships have been associated with bonding social capital (Leonard & Onyx, 2003; Pigg & Crank, 2004) and may provide an individual with a greater number of opportunities to draw upon the resources of either a close relationship with a person like themselves or of a less close relationship with someone less like themselves. Multiplex relationships have also been mentioned in previous research as being more common in rural communities (Looker & Dwyer, 1998).

Many opportunities were mentioned as existing in Gardiner, Pieman and Vincent for multiplex relationships to develop among students and teachers, and multiplex

relationships among students and other community members were observed as existing in all five communities. Where teachers were involved in community activities, students also participating in those activities were able to form closer friendships with teachers than they may otherwise. The Gardiner School careers adviser/work experience teacher's comments about activities which involved student and teachers in that community have been mentioned in Chapter 5 as have the comments of a Bathurst College teacher about ex-Department of Education people and teachers in Vincent who were involved in community activities. Some students' responses confirmed that these opportunities had been taken up. For example, Marjorie and Melanie were members of community groups in which teachers from school participated. About two-thirds of the students also referred to close links with teachers. For example, Craig said teachers from high school were among his many friends in Gardiner, Georgina mentioned being in the school band and having a closer relationship with her school music teacher and Melanie said "I think teachers down there (Pieman) often build very strong relationships with students, and if they are living in the same community even more so."

Multiplex relationships also existed among students and other adults in the five communities. Non-student participants in the research, including those from the schools, made many references to parental participation and community members' involvement in school programmes and activities, and these were detailed earlier in this Chapter. The Pieman School Principal's remarks about the level of adult-supervised community group activities there were included in Chapter 5. This community involvement presented or had the potential to increase opportunities for students, whose family social capital lacked the capacity to bridge to PCET experiences, to interact with adults who had participated in PCET, to develop closer relationships and thus build trust of the people in those relationships.

The discussion of multiplex relationships in the literature has identified a beneficial aspect of these relationships to be when the resources of one relationship can be appropriated for another (appropriable social organisation) (Coleman, 1988; 1990). Those students who had multiplex relationships with people in the community (a quarter of the sample) had taken the opportunity to discuss their PCET aspirations with others they knew - neighbours, work colleagues and others in community groups to which they belonged. The multiplex relationships of more than half of this

subgroup of the sample were shown to be particularly useful during Years 10, 11, and 12 in enabling the students to develop and/or realise PCET aspirations. Where students were from families where PCET was not valued or not valued above other forms of post-school activity, their access to community social capital resources during high school was an advantage in the development of their PCET aspirations. Recognition of students' ability by someone outside the family encouraged the students to develop higher aspirations, and others in the community provided useful information that family did not have or gave students advice which could not be provided by their families.

The remaining students in this subgroup of the sample found the community social capital in their multiplex relationships advantageous in bridging to PCET experiences *in addition* to family social capital. Whilst these students' families did value PCET participation, family social capital resources did not include appropriate information to assist the students during high school to develop and realise PCET aspirations. However, the bridging social capital in these students' multiplex relationships was particularly helpful in providing such information, or providing links to others with such information thus enabling the students to develop and realise PCET aspirations.

All of the students who mentioned a multiplex relationship with another community member had benefited from the social capital resources in those relationships, but three revealed a particularly important or useful outcome for their PCET participation. Richard's Scout leader was later his work experience supervisor and this prior relationship enhanced both his opportunities for accessing resources of use in pursuing his PCET and the likelihood of his using such resources. Some of Simon's part time work colleagues were also fellow members of the Fire Brigade. This enabled him to discuss further PCET opportunities available through his employer with people who were valuable knowledge and identity resources. The opportunity to do so away from the workplace facilitated frank and honest discussion and added to Simon's trust of the advice and opinion he received, which in turn resulted in him taking that advice. Marjorie attributed the development of her interest in a career travelling and working overseas to her school French teacher who was also the leader of a youth group to which she belonged. An overseas trip with the group during high school had instigated Marjorie's new career focus.

Multiplex relationships played a considerable role in building social capital in these rural communities. Through such relationships during high school several students were directly encouraged to develop and realise PCET aspirations. Multiplex relationships were an important information channel and reduced the costs of acquiring information that facilitated students' actions in pursuing PCET aspirations. Students' development of multiplex relationships with other members of the community over a period of time meant those students had built trust of those people and were confident of using the resources of those people in pursuit of PCET. Trust is discussed further in a later section of this chapter.

Effect of students' family and community relationships on students' post-compulsory education and training participation

Unlike multiplex relationships, students' close friendships in, and close connection to the community had the potential for both positive and negative effects on their PCET aspirations and participation. Close relationships with certain peers and others in their schools and communities had potential to have a negative effect on students' PCET aspirations and participation if they resulted in students finding it difficult to leave for further study, for instance, if close friends were not continuing. This eventuated as an issue for a minority of students at the completion of Year 12.

Students experiences confirm the findings of Frank, referred to in Chapter 3 and earlier in this Chapter, regarding the episodic and content-specific nature of social capital (2003, p.5) and showing that social capital can be useful in achieving certain outcomes, while of limited value or even counterproductive in achieving others. Some students' close relationships gave them access to social capital that was helpful for their self-esteem and wellbeing but was not useful in encouraging their PCET. The data suggest that students' close relationships or strong ties had most value in understanding their PCET decisions and behaviour, but that less close relationships or weak ties with specific individuals were also influential. A successful experience of the initial years of PCET - or continuing with a substantial form of post-Year 12 education and training - was associated with a student having close relationships with people who were supportive of their PCET aspirations and participation.

The minority of students who had a limited experience - not completing Year 12 (one), not continuing immediately to any post-Year 12 education and training (two)

or participating in limited post-Year 12 education and training and not in accordance with original aspirations (four) - all had close relationships with individuals in their family or the community or both, who were only partially supportive of, or not supportive of their PCET participation. Most students in this less successful group had close relationships with peers who did not regard PCET participation as particularly valuable, who were not participating at that level themselves and were not supportive of friends doing so.

Students' close community relationships appeared to result in many of them feeling connected to their community. In addition to friends of their own age there were many references to connections to the wider community. For instance, Lisa spoke of getting on well with young people in a community group she helped to run and of being close to others in Chatfield, Marjorie, Anna and Andrew mentioned church friends, Melanie had friends in a drama group, Craig, Marjorie and Melanie had teacher friends and Taylor knew people in the community through school activities.

The close friends or teachers with whom most students had a closer relationship were promoting the benefits of continuing with PCET (e.g. Bronwen, Georgina, Melanie, Taylor, Anna, Edward). Close friends were of great help to students in staying focused on their aspirations. About half of the students retained their close connections to people in the community whilst attending college, either through remaining resident in the community, or through frequent or regular visits to see family and friends, to participate in community group activities and/or for part time employment. Students also maintained contact with supportive friends via telephone and email. As these people were supportive of the students' PCET aspirations, they were a useful source of continuing encouragement and helped students persist with and realise their aspirations. The Rural Student Liaison Officer at Bathurst College mentioned the valuable, supportive and encouraging role of visits, telephone calls and emails from family friends for students who had moved away from home.

People in students' less close relationships did have some impact on their PCET aspirations and participation. This was especially notable where those in students' close relationships were unable to provide all the support required for students' PCET aspirations and participation. For instance where family and/or close friends did not have the knowledge or information students required to develop appropriate

and realistic aspirations, or make PCET decisions, or could not provide the academic or study support they needed.

Bridging social capital in most students' relationships provided useful external links. Students gained access to information about PCET opportunities at urban senior secondary colleges, about the nature of senior secondary college and post-Year 12 study, about employment opportunities elsewhere, about conditions in the national labour market and about the experiences of others in PCET and employment.

The discussion in this section illustrates various aspects of student-family and student-community relationships and indicates how these relationships and networks linked most students to resources useful in pursuing PCET. The discussion also illustrates how those relationships impacted on students' PCET aspirations and behaviour. The findings concur with earlier research indicating that children adopt goals that are valued by individuals with whom they have warm and supportive relationships (Wentzel, 1996). Students' norms and values and those of people in their networks are discussed in more detail in the following section of this chapter.

Norms and values – consonant or dissonant?

Norms are a key conceptual element of social capital, as noted in Chapter 3. The discussion in the previous section introduced the idea that an individual's connections to others expose them to the norms and values of those others - norms and values that may encourage or discourage their PCET participation. Social norms have been described as "the expected ways or patterns of behaviour that reside in a particular community" (Woolcock, 2000, p.17) or more fully as "generally unwritten but commonly understood formulas for both determining what patterns of behaviour are expected in a given social context, and defining what forms of behaviour are valued or socially approved" (Onyx & Bullen, 2000, p.107). Norms are distinguished from values (Jones, 2003, p.7); norms being rules that structure the behaviour of occupants of roles or position in a social structure and values being cultural rules that are not attached to any particular role or set of roles. Values are "summaries of approved ways of living and act as a base from which particular norms spring" and "provide general principles from which norms directing behaviour... are derived" (Jones 2003, pp.7-8).

These definitions are expressed in structural-consensus theoretical terms, implying the determining or structuring of an individuals' behaviour by society's cultural rules. Thus a person's behaviour is channelled in this way rather than that way by these cultural rules, or norms influence individuals to behave in certain ways rather than others. The social constructivist and interpretive theoretical approach taken in this research, discussed in Chapter 4, assumes the most important influence on human actions and an individual's behaviour to be the behaviour of other individuals toward them. Therefore a particular emphasis in this thesis in understanding students' behaviour is placed on their social encounters with others, how students and others understand and interact with one another and how students attach meaning to reality and then choose to act on the basis of that interpretation. Norms and values as defined above are accepted as operating to influence but not necessarily determine students' behaviour. They are part of the process and experience of socialisation.

Norms of relevance to this research are those concerning behaviours of students and those in their personal networks when students were considering their PCET options. This section will examine the norms that characterise the students, their families and others in their community networks, and the sanctions (constraints and rewards) that help maintain those norms and networks.

Students' values and aspirations

Students' aspirations to pursue further PCET after completing Year 12 were based on students' valuing of PCET for a variety of reasons. The manifest reasons underlying students' aspirations were employment-related, as exemplified in the following Phase 1 interview responses to a direct question, "Do you, or do you not think that continuing your education and training to Year 12 and beyond is valuable?"

You can't get a job without an education (Jenny).

Lots of students drop out. Going on sets you apart, you have a better chance of employment. (Anna).

So you can have greater choice of job/career (Nadine).

It can be worthwhile, I can get a job I'm interested in (Scott).

A job with higher qualifications would make me feel more secure that I'll get a job, keep getting jobs (Helena).

There are better jobs if you have a degree (David).

However, a wider range of latent reasons were evident from other responses in students' interviews. A quarter of the students' aspirations were based on their desire to follow intellectual and subject interests or their interest in learning more generally. For instance, Andrew said "It was only in Year 11 that I saw a structure in what I was learning. I learnt something that would be of benefit in the future" and others mentioned the skills, knowledge and understanding to be gained. A similar proportion of the students valued participation to Year 12 and beyond for broader educational and cultural reasons. Mention was made of "getting more experience" (Lisa, Elizabeth, Sarah) and "a broader outscope on what there is to do (Edward). Lisa summed up the far-reaching benefits saying "The better educated you are, the more likely you are to get what you want in life."

Smaller numbers of students valued PCET as a means to a vocational end. For example Simon said "I can't get into Uni without 11/12," Narelle said "The job I'm interested in needs PCET" and Georgina said "I've got an interest in (name of TAFE course)." Personal development reasons were a basis for valuing PCET for a small number of students. Marjorie described Years 11/12 as "a time when you find yourself. You need that time before you go into the workplace to work out what you want to do" and Lisa said "It gives you more experience and better qualifications to go out into the world... meet more people."

For almost all students, PCET appeared to be so highly valued that in Year 12 it was prioritised above any other aspirations. Students valued PCET participation for students generally, though two students did mention the value of other alternatives after Year 12 completion for some students. Helena said "Uni. and TAFE are valuable if you have the motivation" and Georgina said "To Year 12 is valuable, then for some it's ok to stop. They will still succeed, go well."

Students' perceptions of family norms and values regarding post-compulsory education and training

Most students perceived that their parents expected that they would continue with their education after Year 10. In many instances this reflected the view that senior

secondary college attendance was the accepted next step in a young person's life in order to gain a PCET qualification then obtain employment. In the other cases parents' expectations stemmed from the knowledge that student's own aspirations entailed Year 11/12 participation, combined with a high level of confidence that the student would achieve their aspirations. A small number of students said their parents strongly recommended continuing but fell short of actually expecting them to continue. About eighty percent of the sample had parents who were demonstrating a very high valuing of PCET in the form of Years 11/12 participation.

The remaining students perceived their parents' attitude was to leave the decision about continuing to college to them. This may be related to parents' lack of confidence in giving advice or expressing an opinion as some of these parents had not attended college themselves and others had not completed high school (Year 10). Two students said that although the decision was theirs they thought their parents would like them to complete Years 11/12, indicating a valuing of the first two years of PCET. The other three reported that their parents were "happy with whatever I chose" or "didn't mind what I did as long as I was happy" or indicated that the student should "go to college or get a job." These last three responses suggest parental norms that did not value PCET above other options.

Although students' responses indicated that none were from families who did not value Years 11/12 participation to some extent, in a few instances the students' families did not value, or did not value it above other activities such as employment.

Family norms and values regarding post-compulsory education and training and their expectations of students

Families' responses concerning their norms and values regarding PCET were consistent with students' perceptions. (This served as important verification and validation of the data sources.) Where the particular student was concerned, families valued the individual achievement benefits as paramount. Family members valued the student continuing beyond Year 10 for the specific intellectual or subject knowledge the student would gain or for more general learning reasons. Following the student's interests, being assisted to achieve their goals, to be able to learn or continue to learn and to gain qualifications were mentioned specifically. Personal development was another theme describing the reasons families gave. This included

realising the student's potential generally, developing his or her intellectual capacity, developing confidence, a sense of identity, self-worth, purpose, maturity and "making something" of herself or himself. More comprehensive advantages were also perceived for the students. These were the wider educational or cultural benefits - broadening of students' mind and thinking, expanding experiences, seeing more or other opportunities, getting the opportunity to go further with education and training and allowing the student to make a contribution to the community or society. Many different aspects of the benefits to the student in terms of employment were perceived by families, and were expressed in both particular and general terms. Mention was made of getting a well-paid, better, more rewarding, more meaningful job, the job of their choice, a job that "avoids the lower steps on the career ladder" or more simply to get a job (i.e. any job).

Family norms in many cases reflected a limited experience of education and training and a less satisfying experience of work personally, or knowledge of others (family members, friends, neighbours or others in the community) who had such an experience. They may further reflect families' wish for a better experience of work for the student than that of their own or of others they know. Only one student had family networks characterised by no parental PCET, an absence of regret over their non-participation and no expression of a preference or desire for the student's PCET participation. This student did not complete Year 12 successfully.

The families also perceived that Year 11/12 participation was a valuable option for students generally as the colleges provided a range of courses that catered for all. Some families however, mentioned another acceptable and valuable option after completing Year 10 - local employment where this was the student's preference or choice and it was available. In one of the five rural areas it appeared that the employment situation was more positive than in the other four. Job opportunities did exist for some school leavers and were described favourably. For instance, Craig's mother said "Jobs are available with good farmers and with long term prospects." Not surprisingly therefore in this rural area family norms exhibited dissonance; some valuing PCET highly and others valuing local employment as an alternative to participation in PCET for some students. Parents said

Some in rural areas, on the family farm, will be ok without it (PCET) (Marjorie's mother)

If they're happy to work on the farm with their Dad, play footy, etc., that's ok. ... Often people who get a job are as well off as people who go to uni. (Erica's mother).

It depends on the student. Some will go to Year 12 and be satisfied to get a job. I wonder if it's valuable for all (Helena's mother).

Further to this, the decision not to continue was perceived by some non-student participants' as a constructive life choice for some students. A family friend of Craig's referred to people in Gardiner "who didn't think it (education) was important but were contributing (to the community and society)" and Bronwen's student friend said "There's a perception that Year 11/12 studies locally or going straight from Grade 10 to a job is failure." These views echo those reported in the research of Hymel and colleagues (1996) recognising that despite widely accepted evidence to the contrary, leaving school early was entirely appropriate for some students. Other research suggests that there is emerging evidence that not all early leavers have negative experiences and the assumptions that these students are 'at risk' or have failed educationally may be misplaced (Stokes & Wyn, 2007, p.499). A further consideration is that the decision not to continue may be relatively short term and students may return to education and training later. White and Wyn, (2004, p.201) found around eighty percent of Victorian students completing school in 1991 and not continuing with further study returned to study in the ensuing five years. Such a break from school was perceived by a Bathurst College teacher as necessary or desirable for some students. She said "Some have had a gutful, want to leave, need to have a break until they're more positive, (need to) wait till their twenties."

Family norms reflected a differential valuing of Years 11/12 and post-Year 12 education and training. Families' valuing of post-Year 12 education and training participation both for the individual student concerned and for students generally was less strong and their expectations for students' post-Year 12 participation were less explicit than those for Years 11/12. More parents tended to perceive the post-Year 12 decision to be the students' responsibility than was the case for the Year 11/12 participation decision.

Community norms and values regarding post-compulsory education and training

Selection of the five schools was against criteria that included a high level of encouragement of students to participate in PCET, as outlined in Chapter 4. Norms of teachers at the schools and colleges were therefore expected to reflect a valuing of such participation. This was confirmed in both the responses of teachers themselves and those of students and parents; all showed that teachers valued some form of PCET participation as appropriate, advantageous and beneficial for all or most students for reasons analogous to those discussed as held by students and parents.

The data suggest that norms in the five communities had not negatively affected the PCET participation of the students. As discussed earlier, the Apex, Lions and Rotary Clubs' practice of providing scholarships and bursaries to continuing students reflects norms that are supportive of PCET participation. In addition to the direct financial support, this action conveyed to students, families and others in the community the message that PCET participation was a worthwhile and valuable option for students. Many others in these five communities, as individuals or as part of community groups recognised and rewarded students' school achievements at schools' end-of-year awards ceremonies. These ceremonies were well-attended by members of the community including those with no direct connection to the school, signifying a recognition of students' efforts and achievements by the wider community. In one community students' school activities and achievements were also showcased in the local newspaper.

The sporting, religious, drama, music, political or civic community groups to which some students belonged during primary and high school provided opportunities for some to form relationships with adults outside the family and school who had participated in PCET. These friendships had the potential to expose students to adults with norms and values that recognised the advantages and benefits of PCET participation, and to be influenced by those norms and values.

About half of the students made some reference to adults in community groups who had influenced their views about, or their aspirations for PCET. For example Andrew said "People I know in (community group) encourage doing well at school, (and) take an interest in students' school experiences." As a result he perceived them

as good advisers and took their advice. Simon mentioned his discussions with other members of the Fire Brigade, who were also work colleagues and the usefulness of advice he received from them. The norms of these other adults were consonant with those of students' families and teachers at their school and served to reinforce them. A number of students perceived the community group to which they belonged currently or in the past to be of a nature removed from, or not closely associated with education and training (e.g. a sporting club) and there was scant evidence of their exposure to norms that reflected a valuing of PCET.

As discussed above, about half of the students retained close connections to people in the community whilst attending college by remaining resident in the community or by visiting regularly after moving away. The people in these relationships had norms reflecting a high valuing of PCET participation, largely for the qualifications gained, and their interactions with students continued to reinforce these values. The consonance of values of these people and those of students' families further encouraged and supported students to persist with and realise their aspirations.

However, community norms showed some dissonance. Some students and those who had encouraged them spoke about people in the community whose behaviour reflected norms that did not value participation in PCET as highly as local employment or not highly enough to warrant moving away from family and a community where employment was available. One parent commented about the number of families in the community who valued other activities and achievements highly, and who were more concerned about students' sporting prowess and participation and therefore rewarded sporting achievement rather than school achievement. Community norms reflected some resistance to school and education in parts of Chatfield, Gardiner and Pieman. For instance, Principals or teachers referred to concerning levels of absenteeism and families who objected to students doing homework, and one student mentioned verbal abuse she had suffered as a teacher's daughter.

Effect of family and community norms on students' post-compulsory education and training participation

As the earlier discussion revealed, most students' families rewarded students' school achievements, valued PCET and supported students to participate at this level rather

than working against students' desires to pursue PCET away from home. This was expected as a result of the purposive sampling design of the research. In addition, many families were able to provide students with connections to a range of people with further knowledge, information, advice and opinion about PCET opportunities.

A particularly notable effect of students' families' norms regarding the value of PCET was the variation in ways families became involved in students' school education and PCET aspirations and participation. The majority of families whose norms reflected a higher valuing of PCET engaged in more focused and detailed discussions about students' aspirations or participation than those families who regarded PCET less highly. The majority of families' discussions were of a personal or individual rather than a general nature, and they provided personally important, useful or relevant advice or opinion or responded to a problem the student had. However some exceptions were noted. The norms of parents of two students were directing them away from PCET. One family promoted the student's search for employment at the end of Year 12 and helped her with job applications and the other family promoted the prioritising of the students' religious goals and activities, and required PCET aspirations to be tailored to fit. Some parents' valuing of post-Year 12 education and training and their expectations of students may have been affected by financial concerns about the costs of further participation. Transport to college was provided gratis, and some mentioned appreciating the free bus services, but transport to university, TAFE or other VET was not. Parents and teachers referred to the substantial transport costs for students living at home and travelling daily, some of whom were ineligible for government allowances but were nevertheless on modest incomes and therefore would find it difficult to meet these costs.

Dissonant norms and values in a few students' family and community networks challenged their commitment to their PCET aspirations, with some students abandoning their aspirations. Close friends no longer engaged in education and training had encouraged one student to "skip classes" during Year 12, influenced two students to discard post-Year 12 aspirations for full-time education and training in favour of employment, and questioned the rationale of the university aspirations of another. Close friends' norms and values percolated through to these students with long term consequences for three of them; one failed to complete Year 12 and two entered into employment with traineeships preparing them for employment of a less

skilled nature than that to which they originally aspired. The norms of these friends were consonant with those of the three students' families who were less supportive of post-Year 12 participation and merged to result in a negative outcome for the students' PCET participation. The fourth student shared the norms and values of her friends for a limited time; her close attachment to her family and her relationships with teachers and others in the community who shared norms that highly valued PCET resulted in a decision to revert to her original aspiration, university study.

The majority of student participants in this research had close attachments to families who valued PCET increasing the likelihood that they would share those norms and values. Both family members and students valued PCET for development of individual intellectual capacity, achievement of individuals' vocational aspirations, broader educational or cultural benefits, personal development and enhanced employment prospects. The fact that the students had actually continued to college as expected or hoped by most of their parents is indicative of the students sharing their parents' norms regarding the value of Years 11/12 education and training. Students who had developed close relationships with teachers and others at school, discussed in an earlier section of this chapter, were similarly more likely than those who had no such relationships to take on teachers' norms and values as their own.

The students who had a straightforward and successful experience of the initial years of PCET, and the majority of those who had a problematic but successful experience, shared norms and values regarding PCET participation with all of those in their family, school and community networks. Three of the students who had a problematic but successful experience and all except one of the students who had a limited experience of the initial years of PCET had relationships with people who had dissonant norms and values.

As detailed in the literature review in Chapter 3, the sharing of norms by members of a group is associated with development of generalised trust among members of that group (Fukuyama, 1995) and a discussion of trust follows.

Trust and students' use of resources available

In the past trust has been treated in the literature solely as a personal attribute or disposition but is now more widely seen also as a sociological concept; as "the trait

of interpersonal relations, the feature of the socio-individual field in which people operate, the cultural resource utilised by individuals in their actions” (Sztompka, 1999, p.14). Trust is described as “a willingness to take risks in a social context based on a sense of confidence that others will respond as expected and will act in mutually supportive ways or at least that others do not intend harm” (Onyx & Bullen, 2000, p.107).

Trust becomes particularly important to young people making the transition to PCET. During this stage of their lives they are making decisions and taking actions regarding their future in an environment of uncertainty and some risk. In order to make decisions about participation in PCET the students required knowledge of the unfamiliar world beyond their community. Their needs for knowledge and information related to

- particular careers or occupations of interest to them or under consideration,
- financial assistance available for rural senior secondary and tertiary students,
- Year 11/12 curriculum options and choices, and
- information about the non-study aspects of continuing with PCET.

They had especial needs for detailed information about particular aspects of this world, such as the content of a senior secondary college, university or TAFE course, or what a particular job involves on a day-to-day basis. This differs from information about the requirements for entry to a particular course or the necessary qualifications for entry to a particular career or occupation which appear to be central features of the career information available from schools, colleges and the education system. This suggests a need for modification of current practices in career/future information provision.

Types of trust – personal, social and institutional trust

As outlined in Chapter 3, a distinction is made in the literature between personal trust (trust of familiars) and social trust (trust of strangers) (Hughes, et al., 2000).

Personal trust is more easily developed (and perhaps more widespread) as closeness, familiarity and visibility all facilitate the development of such trust. Personal trust was expected to exist in the five rural communities where students attended high school but the existence of social trust was less predictable. Personal trust is likely to

exist among people in small groups, people whose lives are not fragmented and people who know their neighbours (Hughes, et al., 2000). "Social trust differs from personal trust in that it has to do with attitudes to strangers and casual acquaintances" (Hughes, et al., 2000, p.225). Several factors have been linked to levels of social trust, such as level of education (Putnam, 1996), values held by individuals, levels of vulnerability reflected by age, level of socio-economic disadvantage of the local area and the degree of social fragmentation (Hughes, et al., 2000, p.237).

Of particular interest in this research is students' and families' trust of those in institutions, such as the schools, colleges and universities or the education and training system as a whole. Nooteboom (2007, p.30) notes that trust can arise outside relationships more impersonally, on the basis of institutions and may be facilitated by intermediaries or go-betweens. Physical separation from the urban-based senior secondary colleges and other PCET institutions resulted in students' needing to place their trust in various others or strangers in these institutions, or in those who act as intermediaries by providing information about the trustworthiness of those in distant institutions.

Personal trust would enable rural students to be confident of, and freely seek career/future information and advice from familiars within the community. Social trust would enable students to seek career/future information and advice from others within and outside the community not personally known to them and with different experiences and perspectives. Institutional trust of those in schools, colleges and other PCET institutions would enable students to access a more extensive and official range of career information and guidance.

Development of students' social and institutional trust

Trust is built up through interaction with people and is more common amongst people who have known each other for long periods (Stewart-Weeks & Richardson, 1998). The development of close and longstanding relationships among students and their peers and others in the community had been facilitated by factors such as the students' high level of residential stability, the structure of Tasmanian district high schools or the close links between rural primary and high schools, and the common occurrence of multiplex relationships in rural communities.

Residential stability has been identified in previous research as contributing to the development of close relationships among individuals (Hofferth & Iceland, 1998) and as affecting the nature and quality of relationships between students and others in their schools and communities (Israel, et al., 2001). The data in this research support those findings. Two-thirds of the students had lived in the same house all their lives or had moved once or a few times within the area and had developed close friendships and networks through attendance at the same school. The remaining students had lived outside the area, although most had moved into the community during primary school or at the beginning of Year 7.

The structure of Tasmanian district high schools with classes from Kindergarten to Year 10 at the one site and the closely-linked nature of rural primary and secondary schools enabled three-quarters of the students and/or their families to form close and longstanding friendships with others in the community and at school. For instance, Lisa said "... some (in Chatfield) like the local high school because students have the same friends all through school, you can get to know the teachers really well which is positive." Sarah said the people in Vincent "think it's a great school because it's small and close knit." The close relationships among students and teachers were also mentioned by the Chatfield School Principal, a teacher at Vincent School and the Bathurst College Country Liaison Officer who said "I get the feeling that their teachers in district high schools encourage them a lot to aspire to meet their potential. They know them better than in city high schools." Half of the students spoke about close relationships with subject or class teachers, Principals or Assistant Principals.

Simply living in a community for a long time is not the only factor involved in developing trust of those in the community. A feeling of connection to the community, or to a group or groups in the community, discussed earlier, also contributes, as do relationships of a multiplex rather than simplex nature. Membership in networks and the norms that guide their interactions in turn generate knowledge and trust which then facilitate reciprocity and cooperation (Kilpatrick, et al., 2003). More than three-quarters of the students appeared connected to the community and thus had the opportunity to develop trust of those in their community networks. Many had close attachments to family friends or had positive relationships with people in the community, through membership of community groups, having other adult friends or through school activities.

The sharing of norms regarding PCET participation among students, members of their families, teachers and others at the high schools and colleges and members of the community, discussed earlier in this Chapter, enabled most of those individuals to develop trust and to engage in cooperative behaviour to achieve common goals and was of assistance to students in achieving PCET aspirations. Close relationships with teachers resulted in students' developing a high level of institutional trust of those people as intermediaries. They provided knowledge and information about distant and unfamiliar PCET institutions, were trusted sources of advice or opinion about students' PCET choices, and offered encouragement and support of students' aspirations that assisted the students to continue with or persist with PCET.

Trust of family, community and institutional resources

Trust and family resources

Many students had useful knowledge and information resources in their family networks. However, some students' trust of family resources was reduced where parents' PCET experiences were perceived as less directly valuable because the PCET had been completed outside Tasmania or Australia (e.g. Melanie, Craig, David) or where that PCET was in a different field from that of interest to the student (e.g. Joanna, Amy, Simon, Narelle, Edward). Students' trust of parental resources was also reduced by the time lapse since parents had participated in PCET.

They've been through uni, they know a bit. (They) probably know about the old courses, you know the basic courses, but about all the new ones, they probably wouldn't know (Helena).

Mum did uni. ages ago, but she had lost contact about it all (Lisa).

By contrast Craig and Jenny both regarded their mothers as a trusted, valuable resource, due to the currency of their knowledge and information. Craig said

Mum knows a fair bit (about university/TAFE courses). She's always got the handbook or whatever, and (is) reading up on it, 'cos she's trying to prepare for my (younger) brothers as well.

Jenny perceived her mother "had an inside view" of a pharmacy career and "was a good source of information" through her job as a dispensary technician in the Vincent Pharmacy. Bronwen regarded her mother as an indirect knowledge and information source as she "knows the people to contact."

The more recent PCET experiences of older siblings were perceived as much more trusted resources, whether or not they were directly related to the students' own aspirations, as revealed in the following quotations.

My brother helped me find information about Law jobs on the internet (Anna).

I did most of that (discussion about college subject choices) with my sister because she'd been through it all (Taylor).

I basically just asked my older brother, (name), who'd also done Science in university, um, what subjects would be useful. Like Maths, which Maths I should do, mmm, which was good (Nadine).

One-third of the students had a high level of trust of extended family members as providers of knowledge and information. They had received and used information about a specific career of interest, information about their relatives' own education and career, general information about university study, information about and assistance with obtaining accommodation, and knowledge about college enrolment.

Trust and community resources

Students' trust of those in the community was initially assessed via their responses to a question about whether people in the community were important in encouraging students to continue with PCET. Generally where students said that the community was not important, or not very important, this was indicative of a lack of trust of those in the community. About one third of the students' responses indicated some lack of trust which appeared to stem from a high degree of personal trust and thus reliance on family or a high level of student independence.

I've never had to rely on anyone outside family (Amy).

... students only listen to parents (Claire).

They don't really do anything (to encourage) (Elizabeth).

Students wouldn't listen to them, would call them busybodies (Jenny).

It's the students' choice (Scott).

Responses suggested one-third of the students had personal trust of familiars in the community, such as family friends, peers or “those you know.” A number of students had obtained helpful information and advice from family friends (e.g. Anna, Lisa, Nadine, Helena, Edward), community group friends (e.g. Andrew, Bronwen), neighbours or others they knew in the community (e.g. Anna, Lisa). Two-thirds of the students had qualified social trust of those representing particular groups in the community such as service clubs, employers, occupational groups or individuals who were role models or mentors. For example, Georgina said “they (the community) don’t know you so well but the Apex scholarship was good to encourage me” and Sarah said “Mostly they’re not (important in encouraging students) but my boss was for me.”

A few students displayed wider social trust. These students trusted those people who could provide additional encouragement and support, those who could provide independent opinions and those with relevant experiences that could be informative. For example, Simon recognised that the encouragement he received from people in the community extended the overall encouragement and support he was receiving and meant “more people backing you.” He perceived this increased his chance of success. Comments from Simon’s college subject teacher’s interview confirmed his use of the resources available from total strangers as well as those known to him. Lisa perceived that people in the community were important in encouraging her, and perhaps other students, primarily as a source of impartial opinion, saying “You need the opinion of someone, not a relative, to encourage you, advise you. You trust their opinion more.” Taylor took the opportunity to obtain relevant and useful knowledge and information from a fellow member of the Point Hibbs Youth Committee who had participated in PCET. Their continuing relationship over two years meant that Taylor had developed a level of trust enabling her to use the knowledge and information available and to act on the advice given. Bronwen readily utilised resources in her Macquarie community group networks to obtain information about studying and living interstate, saying “If I meet people who’ve lived in the area or have been to a similar uni. I just talk to them, (laughter) straightaway.”

A further indication of students’ trust of those in the community was taken from their responses to the question whether there was more that the community could do to encourage students to continue with PCET. Some level of trust of those in the

community was a necessary condition for, or was entailed if students perceived there was more the community to do to encourage students. A higher level of trust was apparent in these responses. Most students perceived that the community could further encourage by acting as career mentors, giving motivational talks at school, providing information, promoting continuing to college, attending schools' Career Nights, by providing more awards, being "more interested in students" or having "more of a positive outlook (toward PCET), and let(ting) young people know they support it." Only a quarter of the students thought it was not the "business" or the "job" of the community to encourage students.

Opportunities for students and families to build trust of others from outside the community came through intermediaries in family and community networks. The role of intermediaries in developing trust of relative strangers was discussed by Nooteboom (2007). Family friends, fellow community group members and employment contacts played a part in enabling several students to develop a level of trust of strangers.

Trust and school, college and education system resources

School and college networks were the obvious source, both directly and indirectly, of much knowledge and information and some of the advice and opinion that students sought when making PCET decisions. The level of students' institutional trust of school teachers varied, and depended on the length and depth of the acquaintance and the students' respect for the teachers' knowledge, advice and opinion.

Principals, an Assistant Principal, class and subject teachers, teachers responsible for work experience placements and career education programmes and a designated careers adviser at one school were knowledge resources (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000). About seventy percent of the students exhibited a high level of trust of school teachers, with a further twenty-five percent showing some trust – trust of some teachers but not others, or a lesser level of trust of all of their teachers. Half of the students nominated school teachers as people who had encouraged them, and another quarter referred to relationships or interactions with teachers that suggested a trusting relationship between the student and a teacher or teachers. Only one student appeared to lack trust of the teachers at school. Overall, schools were perceived as official, authoritative and reliable sources of knowledge and information about

continuing with PCET, of advice and opinion about students' ability and, in several instances, of encouragement and support for students' PCET aspirations. Some also provided extremely useful college contacts.

Further opportunities for students and families to build trust of others from outside the community came via school careers activities and events. Gardiner students appear to have been exposed to the largest number of these opportunities through the school's Career Evening, but Pieman, Point Hibbs and Vincent students also referred to some opportunities such as when college students came to the school to tell students about college or "visiting speakers" came to school to talk about their occupations. One Vincent student expressed regret over a lack of useful (i.e. relevant to her interests) people visiting the school.

The majority of students had built close relationships in a shorter period of time with college subject teachers, suggesting that students develop institutional trust of college teachers more readily. A quarter of the students had nominated a college teacher or careers adviser as someone who had encouraged them to continue with PCET. Half of the students referred to college teachers or careers advisers as trusted sources of knowledge and information about post-Year 12 courses, attending post-Year 12 institutions, and especially about career opportunities, and the industry of interest to the student. Two students considering a teaching career each mentioned a college teacher as an exemplary teacher. There was some suggestion that students' trust of college teachers was based on their perception of them as especially knowledgeable or as experts in their fields, and of teachers outside the community as authoritative sources representing reputable or recognisable institutions.

Institutional trust including trust of the education system is necessary if not vital in encouraging students to participate in PCET, and is discussed further in Chapter 7.

Effect of students' trust on use of resources

Students had varying levels of trust of the different people in their networks and this affected their decisions regarding the range and extent of resources that they would access. Most had someone in their networks that they trusted as a source of the knowledge and information, advice and opinion or encouragement and support they needed. However, some were less willing to use the resources of people they did not

know well, or knew less well than members of their family and in some instances, teachers at their school or college. Overall, there was much evidence of personal trust, some evidence of institutional trust but less evidence of social trust.

A preponderance of personal trust and a lack of social and institutional trust meant that it was important for many students to have received information about PCET opportunities and experiences from students attending those PCET institutions and preferably ex-students from their school. Similarly, students were most interested in career information provided by people in that career. Other people's direct experiences of the institution or career were most valued and more readily trusted. A small number of students preferred to receive information personally rather than in written form, and one student wished to receive information only from a familiar. Such sources were more amenable to these students as they had personal trust of the provider or had developed social trust of the provider because that person was known to them or known to someone they knew. A lack of people with the necessary knowledge and information or relevant experience in the personal networks of such students may have had a negative effect on their PCET participation.

These student preferences have implications for the dissemination of PCET information. Although there is some use of ex-students currently, greater involvement of such students and more formal training of these individuals for the task would increase the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of dissemination of PCET information. The data also suggested that further improvement in the effectiveness of dissemination of information would be achieved by utilising family and other community members as information channels. A similar approach in providing the necessary knowledge and information to the appropriate individuals combined with training for passing on that information would maximise the effectiveness of the strategy.

Some students had a low level of awareness of the wide range of sources of knowledge and information, advice and opinion, and encouragement and support available and of which they might make use of themselves. High levels of personal trust resulted in these students perceiving only the resources contained within family and close friendship networks. Some students were less willing to use the full range of available resources as a consequence of low levels of social trust.

Summary

With only one exception the students had sufficient resources in their personal networks, to enable them to successfully participate in the initial two years of PCET (Years 11/12). All or at least some of the people in their family and community networks had norms reflecting a valuing of PCET and students shared these norms. Students' family and community networks contained people whom they trusted as sources of knowledge and information, advice or opinion and encouragement or support in the development and/or realisation of their PCET aspirations.

The majority of students also had sufficient resources in their family and community networks to enable their successful participation in post-Year 12 education and training. The students who had a limited experience of PCET had close family or community connections to others, whose norms did not reflect a valuing of PCET, or reflected a valuing only in utilitarian terms, or as only one of a number of acceptable options after Year 12, or had connections with people with dissonant norms regarding PCET. The students tended to trust these people rather than others in the community who were more supportive of PCET.

Students' networks provided them with access to bonding and bridging social capital of use in developing and realising PCET aspirations. There was some overlap in the resources provided by bonding and bridging networks, with some students' bonding networks providing access to similar resources to those through their bridging networks; an overlap not prominent in the literature but noted relatively recently.

Multiplex relationships were important in building bridging social capital in the five communities. The high level of mixing of students, teachers and other adults through participation in community activities provided potential for the development of these multiplex relationships. In these five communities where PCET was generally supported and promoted, students' participation in community activities was likely to expose them to adults who encouraged rather than discouraged their PCET aspirations and participation. The quarter of the sample who reported a multiplex relationship found it advantageous for their PCET aspirations especially during high school but also in Years 11/12. These relationships provided benefits to students whose family social capital lacked the capacity to bridge to PCET experiences and the bridging social capital in the community was particularly helpful. Students

whose family social capital resources could provide some bridging to PCET experiences found the community social capital in their multiplex relationships advantageous in bridging to PCET experiences *in addition to* family social capital. These findings may be helpful for school and college teachers wishing to identify students in need of assistance to build bridging social capital.

The positive situation of the majority of the students in the sample may not be replicated widely in these five communities however. As already stated, Stokes and colleagues (2006) have noted the possibility that an area may appear to demonstrate a high level of social capital but that social capital may be evident for only a proportion of the population.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and discussion

Introduction: Review of the research problem

The review of the extensive educational participation literature revealed much discussion of a range of factors underlying patterns of PCET participation (e.g. Marks, et al., 2000; Lamb, et al., 2000; Roussel & Murphy, 2000; Roussel, 2002; McMillan & Marks, 2003; Fullerton, et al., 2003; Lamb et al., 2004). Living in and attending school in a rural area was one of the factors negatively influencing PCET participation (DEET, 1990; AEC, 1991; HEC, 1996). Research also indicated the following factors influence educational participation; family educational and cultural resources (Ainley, et al., 1997), family values surrounding education (Wooden, 1999; Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman, 2002), parental aspirations (Marks, et al., 2000), and educational and employment experiences of older siblings (Abbott-Chapman & Baynes, 2002).

The review highlighted the fact that rural students and students from low socio-economic backgrounds remained under-represented in PCET participation (Lamb, et al., 2000; Fullerton, et al., 2003; Marks, et al., 2000; Stevenson, et al., 2001; Khoo & Ainley, 2005). The literature revealed large urban-rural contrasts in students' attitudes toward school and PCET (James, et al., 1999), qualitative differences between transition patterns of urban and rural youth (Looker & Dwyer, 1998) and the localised and highly personal nature of influences on students' PCET aspirations (James, et al., 1999).

This thesis asserts that further understanding of rural transition patterns and the particular nature of influences on rural students' PCET aspirations requires a different approach from much of the previous research. A focus on rural students' experiences of the initial years of the transition and an emphasis on the students' perspective of that transition are seen as able to contribute to this understanding and build upon existing knowledge about rural PCET participation. Examining the experiences of a positive sample of rural students who had been encouraged by family and community to continue with PCET, and who had begun and achieved some degree of success in PCET in an urban centre has revealed new insights about rural transition patterns and influences on rural students' aspirations.

This thesis closely examined the experiences of 24 Tasmanian rural students who were continuing with PCET away from their home community and had been encouraged by others to do this. Both the processes of developing and realising PCET aspirations, and also the students' day-to-day experiences during the initial years of PCET were scrutinised.

The experiences of students were captured at two different points in time and from two different perspectives. Data regarding earlier experiences were collected from students in Semester 1 of Year 12 in 2003, whilst later experiences were the topic of interviews approximately one year later when students were in the early stages of post-Year 12 education and training or other activity. The perspective of those who had encouraged the students was obtained in data collected in the latter half of 2003.

Detailed qualitative analysis categorised students' experiences into three types, depending on the degree of difficulty encountered, the level of encouragement to continue received and students' relative success in pursuing their PCET aspirations. The development of these three student participation profiles proved helpful in the examination of the factors in family, school and community which encourage or discourage students' transition to PCET. These factors have been described in Chapter 5 as push and pull factors and are associated with the elements of social capital.

Greater insight was sought into how these students were encouraged by people in their family and community networks to persist with PCET under often difficult and trying circumstances. These insights were anticipated to result in an increased understanding of rural students' relationships with others in their families and communities and the use they make of them when making career and future decisions. The student, family and community perspectives of the transition process were anticipated to be varied and different from each other and also from official, school and education system discourses. The insight from these other perspectives, combined with current knowledge may lead to development of novel, fresh and alternative strategies for use by teachers and others in schools to encourage more rural students to participate in PCET, and may also have wider implications for educational policy and planning.

The research has identified and evaluated the family, school, community and other factors that encouraged or discouraged students' development of PCET aspirations and progress toward realising those aspirations. It is strongly based on a review of the extensive PCET participation literature covering several decades. In particular, the research sought reasons why this sample of rural students differed from the majority of their peers on the basis of successfully completing the first year of PCET and appearing both confident and likely to be successful in completing Year 12 and the post-Year 12 education and training to which they aspired. Publicly available information revealed in 2006 and 2007 that five of the students had graduated from the University of Tasmania or had successfully completed a TAFE course. Thirteen others were still enrolled in the later years of university or TAFE courses and appeared likely to complete in 2008 or 2009 - depending upon the length of course chosen. A small group of students, representing one-eighth of the sample, had a less successful experience of initial PCET than anticipated, completing a form of post-Year 12 education and training of shorter duration and less substantial nature than their original aspiration. Another small group of students had a very limited experience – one was unable to complete the post-Year 12 traineeship begun, one discontinued education and training after the end of Year 12 and one did not complete Year 12. Together these two groups represented a quarter of the sample not realising their original aspiration or not realising a revised and equivalent aspiration.

The literature suggests that a change of aspiration may be a common occurrence. Alloway, Dalley, Patterson, Walker and Lenoy found that Year 10 and 12 students in New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland had multiple aspirations and intentions and exhibited a high degree of flexibility in their thinking about PCET options (2004, pp.5-6). Increasing insistence on obtaining post-school credentials combined with increasing uncertainties in the labour market have been linked to the rising ambitions of young people (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999; Dwyer & Wyn, 2001). Both of these may be factors that contribute to a tendency for students to change their aspirations. Change may also be expected given that an element of trial and error is observed to be involved in students' change of direction and course and students are seen as taking a pragmatic approach (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001, p.82) and that some course change and attrition may be regarded as part of a settling-in period in the transition from school to higher education (McMillan, 2005, p.iv).

Within the three student PCET participation profiles, three-quarters of the students were, or appeared well on the way to being successful in realising their PCET aspirations. A detailed examination of students' positive experiences and the information gained from analysis of data and the recommendations stemming from the analysis may therefore add to the resources we have to draw upon in finding solutions to the problems of transition from rural high school to PCET in urban secondary colleges and assist future students to have an similarly positive experience.

The thesis utilised the contemporary and emerging concept of social capital to help understand family and community encouragement of students. Particular attention was paid to students' personal networks, the nature of relationships between students and family members, and between students and others in the community, to family and community norms and values regarding PCET, to whether students shared norms and values with those in their families or communities, and to students' personal, institutional and social trust.

This small-scale, intensive and qualitative enquiry was able to uncover the detailed reality of students' experiences, in particular the process of developing and realising their PCET aspirations, and to build a complex, holistic picture (Creswell, 1998) of their experiences. The examination of students' construction of the meaning of the transition to PCET was central to this enquiry and the social constructivist approach adopted facilitated this. The ethnographic approach of developing a long-term relationship with students also promoted the eliciting of students' understanding and meaning (Merriam, 1998). The understanding of the rural student perspective was an important aim of the research and was constructed over a period of about eighteen months from first contact with the students. The semi-structured interviews gave privileged insights into key factors in rural students' transition to PCET away from home. The inclusion of the views of people who had encouraged the students increased understanding of the situations and circumstances of students making this transition. The intensive nature of the research produced rich ethnographic data which formed the basis for the analysis of the social capital available to students that was contained in Chapter 6.

Data analysis followed a process outlined by Creswell (2003) and consisted of the development and refinement of categories to reveal students' views of the reality of their transition. The analysis facilitates a better understanding of the process of students' transition from rural high school through to the beginning of post-Year 12 education and training, primarily as seen from the students' point of view but also from the perspective of those who had encouraged them. It permits the complexity of the situation of rural students and their families and communities to be fully described and understood as well as enabling the focus to rest on the encouraging factors in context, and revealing the inter-relationships with other factors.

The findings have revealed a more varied range of post-Year 12 outcomes than was expected, given the selection of a positive sample of rural students who intended to complete Year 12 studies and continue to some form of post-Year 12 education and training and had been encouraged by a person or persons in their family or community to do so. As revealed above, about a quarter of the students had a less successful experience of initial PCET than anticipated and either did not realise their original aspiration or did not realise a revised and equivalent aspiration. This was a surprising finding, but one that is largely understood with reference to the characteristics of students' family and community networks, to the quality of social capital resources in the students' family and community networks, to the role played by family and community social capital in encouraging or discouraging the development and realisation of students' aspirations and to students' use of available social capital.

Research questions

The three key research questions which the research was designed to answer are:

- What role does social capital, particularly that available to students through family and community networks, play in shaping students' PCET aspirations?
- What role does social capital, particularly that available to students through family and community networks, play in encouraging or discouraging students' realisation of their PCET aspirations?

- How useful is the concept of social capital in understanding rural students' PCET careers?

A summary of findings which answer these questions, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, is presented below.

Summary findings and conclusions

Research Question 1: What role does social capital, particularly that available to students through family and community networks, play in shaping students' post-compulsory education and training aspirations?

Findings show that the characteristics of students' networks influenced the nature of social capital available in those networks. As the discussion in Chapters 5 and 6 has illustrated, the majority of the students had networks that were characterised by

- close student-family attachments,
- established and positive student-teacher and/or student-community relationships
- availability of resources that were useful in supporting them to continue with PCET,
- family and/or community norms that valued and were supportive of PCET,
- consonance of student-family and student-community norms valuing PCET, or ready resolution of conflict in family and community norms and values in a way that favoured participation, and
- student trust of those in family, school and community as sources of PCET knowledge, information, advice, opinion and/or encouragement and support of PCET participation.

The discussion in Chapter 6 has shown that students' use of and benefit from social capital available to them in family and community networks was a considerable influence in shaping the PCET aspirations of about two-thirds of the students, and was some influence in shaping the aspirations of the remaining one-third of students. Students used family and community social capital resources to gain knowledge or information, advice or opinion that were of assistance when developing their PCET aspirations. People who knew the students well were particularly adept at matching

their suggestions and encouragement to the particular characteristics of the individual concerned.

Most students' families had acted as identity resources (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000), contributing to students' constructing their identity as a person for whom PCET is appropriate, possible and closely linked to their future. Students' constructs of themselves were positive and driving forces that influenced the PCET decisions they made. Students interpreted their situations as individuals who had developed or were developing PCET aspirations and would need to take certain actions in order to realise those aspirations. Those in students' families were also implicated in students' construction of themselves as desiring and having the ability to take up career or employment opportunities related to their PCET.

The discussion in Chapter 6 also showed that students' close attachments to family and their sharing of the family's high valuing of PCET meant that most students trusted their family to act as knowledge resources (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000). They trusted their family to provide relevant and required knowledge or information of use to them in developing PCET aspirations, to give personally-appropriate advice or opinion regarding PCET participation or to link them to others who could provide this knowledge, information, advice or opinion. Some students' families were less well-prepared and able to provide such knowledge, information or advice as they lacked the education and training background or experience. For example Claire's grandmother said "the likes of me didn't know anything. I had to find out myself. I went to Bathurst College quite a few times." Other rural parents may not be so proactive, suggesting a need for schools to provide greater assistance to families trying to encourage their sons/daughters to continue with PCET.

Generally, families wanted the best for their sons and daughters and perceived education and training as the pathway to a better future than they themselves had. They recognised the benefits of urban-based PCET in terms of broadening students' perspectives, improved employment opportunities and the access to further education and training opportunities. This reflected an underlying desire for the students to benefit from schooling and education and resulted in a high level of support for students to develop PCET aspirations.

The majority of the students had families who were closely involved in their education, as reflected in the number of family members nominated by students as having encouraged them to continue with PCET. Many students had a family member who had shown an early interest in their school achievement and/or the development of their PCET aspirations. Those in students' family networks had encouraged students to develop PCET aspirations, to have high aspirations, to perceive themselves as able to achieve their aspirations, to perceive anything as possible and therefore as able to write or produce their own social biography (Beck, 1992).

Students' experience of trust as being built over a period of time made it difficult for some to develop trust of people outside the community of whom they had little personal knowledge and with whom they had no personal relationship. It was also difficult to develop trust more rapidly as was necessary to participate in PCET away from home. The students who were able to more readily develop social and institutional trust were able to use the social capital in a wider range of different relationships to assist in developing PCET aspirations. An important finding was that the development of such social and institutional trust was considerably enhanced for those students who had an older sibling who had participated in PCET. The older siblings of about half of the students had forged links with people at college and in the urban community that were useful to both younger siblings and parents. A similar impact was noted for about half of the students who had older cousins and about a quarter of them with family friends who had participated in PCET. The experiences of these people gave the students access to bridging social capital. Students' older siblings, cousins and/or family friends were a source of useful and relevant knowledge and information or advice and opinion about PCET courses available in urban centres, about studying at an urban senior secondary college, about outside (i.e. non-rural) employment opportunities and labour market conditions.

Close attachments and a high level of trust of family social capital resources resulted in a very small number of students lacking trust in sources outside the family and being reluctant or unwilling to use community social capital. This finding confirms the suggestion made by Frydenberg (1997) that family influences can work against the development of trust, by creating a situation where the student seeks help or advice only from that source. Three students' close attachments to family meant that

they perceived family as the only, or most important, source of social capital resources that was useful for the development of their PCET aspirations. Family norms resulted in some students' perception that asking other people, especially those not known personally, for help is inappropriate. For a few students, family was so important that they disregarded community social capital resources that may have provided additional assistance in shaping their PCET aspirations.

Discussion in the literature has revealed that close attachments to family are important for students' wellbeing but in some families may also work against students' desires to pursue education and training away from the rural area and against the development of PCET aspirations. Whilst students' close attachments to family were found in this research, those attachments in the majority of instances were not discouraging students' PCET aspirations, although there was some anecdotal evidence of this occurring in a minority of rural families and of it being a more widespread occurrence in the past. This suggests that rural families' attitudes toward PCET participation are changing and becoming more positive. There are prospects for further increasing rural participation rates so research informing the development of strategies to achieve this is valuable. This research has shown that the impact of students' close attachments to family can be both positive and negative, but negative impacts may have been more prominent in the literature.

Schools and teachers also supported and encouraged students in a similar way, preparing students to expect to participate in PCET, promoting such participation widely, and enabling students to participate. This was achieved via school programmes specifically preparing students for senior secondary study and through the provision of career advice and guidance. Close relationships between students and teachers meant students took note of teachers' advice, suggestions and recommendations and placed a greater reliance on the support given.

In contrast, the quality of the social capital available to a substantial minority of the students had a less positive impact on the shaping of their PCET aspirations. Just under one-third of students found their networks lacked some of the resources that they needed in order to continue with PCET and this made the development of their aspirations more difficult and uncertain. A perception of a lack of needed resources or an inadequacy in those available is suggested by the data in this research as

explaining why some students are reluctant to use some of the available community social capital. A Dusseldorp Skills Forum policy paper, *"Honouring Our Commitment"* (2002) also alludes to this situation. In a discussion of the influence of family and community relationships on young people's trajectories and pathways, attention is drawn to the short-comings of career and future information.

... at the critical point when young people are thinking about leaving school early or have left, we provide haphazard, often random support. Information about possible careers, work and courses, increasingly available online, can be a puzzle and access to personal guidance and support tends to be hit-or-miss. ... And in only a handful of communities do we call on local skills and goodwill to assist young people ... with mentors or role models prepared to be there over the long haul" (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2002, p.10).

Whilst there is some evidence that role models and mentors were available and utilised by students in the five communities, some students did express a desire for career/future information to be provided earlier, for more personalised career guidance and for assistance with interpretation of career information in the form it was provided to them. Other research has also shown that students express a desire for improved career counselling and specific information about course and careers (Witko, Bernes, Magnusson & Bardick, 2005). Students generally regarded schools as providers of all the knowledge and information they need for continuing with PCET, with only a minority of students prepared to independently search out additional or other career information. This perspective differs from school, education system and societal perspectives which expect students and individuals to gather information themselves from a range of self-serve style sources. Some modification of career preparation programmes in schools and colleges is suggested to address this.

Small rural schools in small communities have a distinct advantage over larger schools in urban communities, in their capacity to provide personal encouragement to students. Smaller student numbers enable teachers and students to form closer relationships and these are conducive to provision of more personalised support and encouragement. Personal encouragement is more likely to be possible in a small community where interpersonal recognition is characteristic. The schools and communities featured in this research had exploited this advantage. Each of the

student participants had been personally encouraged to develop PCET aspirations by someone or several people from the school or the community or both. Personal encouragement was the preferred mode of encouragement for most students, even though several were also encouraged to develop PCET aspirations by people not personally known to them (e.g. Melanie who was encouraged by the editor of the local newspaper, as discussed in Chapter 6). The impact of the policy decision made by the schools featured in this research to provide some local PCET options has the potential to have a greater impact on increasing their PCET participation rates than the same policy in a larger community, because of the community's ability to personally encourage a greater percentage of students to participate in locally-provided PCET. Once these courses are completed the students can be encouraged to participate in urban-based PCET.

As revealed by the discussion in Chapter 6 the majority of students also had close attachments and/or established relationships with a range of different members of the community, and shared with them norms that regarded PCET highly. Students perceived those in the community were acting as knowledge resources, providing information about PCET opportunities and study at urban senior secondary colleges, about careers and employment prospects for those with PCET qualifications, and providing links to others outside the community who had further information.

Community members also acted as identity resources, encouraging and supporting the students' participation in PCET. Individuals and/or groups in the community assisted some students who were uncertain to see themselves as able to participate at this level, proffered advice or opinion that reinforced students' commitment to PCET aspirations and confirmed students' aspirations as appropriate. Community social capital facilitated the process by which students constructed their identity as one in which PCET participation and career or vocational achievement was a major part of how they saw themselves in the future and one that contributed to their overall self-esteem and wellbeing. Community social capital in a small number of instances contributed to some students linking their identity more closely to immediate achievement of perceived adult status by obtaining employment and becoming financially independent.

People in students' community networks who valued PCET also helped to shape students' PCET aspirations by assisting them to become aware of resources in their networks that were useful in developing their aspirations. Those in students' community networks were able to increase students' willingness to use available resources and were implicated in extending the networks which students were able to use - by providing students with opportunities to meet with other adults with PCET experience and qualifications, or experiences in a particular career of interest to the student. Multiplex relationships were especially effective in this. They linked a quarter of the students to another adult in the community in more than one context (school and community group, neighbour and community group or employment and community group). The students had benefited from the social capital which became available to them through those relationships, in terms of appropriable social organisation and reduced costs of acquiring information (Coleman, 1988; 1990) which had positively influenced the development of those students' PCET aspirations.

Many community members, especially those in Pieman and Gardiner demonstrated a high valuing of one particular form of PCET by themselves participating in locally provided VET and there was an enthusiastic level of adult student take-up of newly-provided VET opportunities in Vincent. These positive role models were observed and noted by many in the community including students. Other positive role models in the communities were mentioned by students as influential in the development of their aspirations. They had been important in demonstrating to students what was possible for people in their community to achieve.

Community recognition of students' school achievements through local media and rewarding of achievement by awarding scholarships, bursaries, medallions, prizes and other forms of funding assistance showed all students that the community valued PCET in addition to the welcome financial assistance that was provided to individuals. Particular individuals, the business/industry sector and those on local councils were an important source of interest in and support of young people's school activities and achievement. Most students' established and positive relationships with others in the school and community meant that they shared norms regarding the value of PCET with them and had developed institutional or social trust of those people. These people had provided knowledge and information, trustworthy

advice and opinion and/or encouragement and support that students had found relevant and useful whilst developing PCET aspirations and of which they were prepared to take advantage.

Family and community networks sometimes stretched outside the local community. Students had contact with family members and/or friends living interstate or in other parts of Tasmania. Students found the social capital in these outside contacts or external ties to be useful in developing their PCET aspirations. The minority of students using only internal ties were effectively restricting the knowledge they may gain about many aspects of relevance to their career/future decision making and may have been limiting their aspirations.

Social capital in family and community networks played a major role in the development of the PCET aspirations of about one-third students who may not have done so without the influence or involvement of people in those networks. Less crucially, some parents and/or older siblings expected, recommended or suggested to students that post-Year 10 and/or post-Year 12 education and training was their best option, thus preparing students to expect to participate in PCET. Others enabled students to feel it was possible to develop realistic and achievable PCET aspirations and some influenced students to participate by recognising, and encouraging students to recognise, the utilitarian value of PCET participation.

Higher levels of personal, institutional and social trust as discussed in Chapter 6 gave most students access to a wide range of resources to assist them in developing PCET aspirations, whereas lower levels effectively closed off potentially useful resources for a minority of them. Most students found information from and discussed their PCET options and choices with others and about half the students heard about other people's education and training and career experiences. Half of the students sought the opinions of others in their networks and around one-third of the students used their networks to seek advice. All of these consultations assisted students to develop appropriate and realistic PCET aspirations and contributed to a positive decision making process.

The majority of families of students participating in this research and most people in the five communities were characterised by an ability to pass on to students a valuing

of PCET and to convey their willingness to help students to develop PCET aspirations. In combination families, schools and community members had a positive impact on these students in terms of shaping their identities and futures as involving participation in PCET and later as well-qualified participants in the labour market. Overall students perceived the community climate as one that encouraged the development of PCET aspirations. They perceived people were concerned for others, took an interest in young people generally and in their school achievements, and recognised and rewarded students for those achievements. This had a positive effect on their PCET aspirations.

Research Question 2: What role does social capital, particularly that available to students through family and community networks, play in encouraging or discouraging students' realisation of their post-compulsory education and training aspirations?

Whilst the social capital available in students' networks influenced the majority of students to develop PCET aspirations, the students' use of that available social capital was of more striking and particular influence on whether or not the students realised their aspirations. Use of and benefit from family and community social capital resources was a major factor in the ability of about half of the students to persist with and realise their aspirations, and was a factor associated with persisting with and realising the aspirations of the remaining half of the students.

Where student-family attachments were close and family norms reflected a high valuing of PCET and were supportive of students' participation - as was the case for the majority of the students - family social capital played an important role in encouraging these students to persist with PCET. The students had access to a level of information that raised their awareness of changes required in order to continue with their education and training and to assistance that enabled them to prepare for and manage those changes thus encouraging them to persist with PCET. Where student-family attachments were close but the family did not value PCET, or did not value it over other options available to students and were not explicitly or demonstrably supportive of students' participation - which was the case for a minority of students - the students were either not encouraged or were discouraged from persisting with their education and training. They had little or no access to family social capital that assisted them in developing strategies to manage the

pressures of continued study. Family social capital played a similarly important role in discouraging these students from persisting with their education and training. This finding concurs with other research linking a decline in student motivation and confidence in Year 12 to students' difficulty in matching the demands of the final school year with resources available to them (Smith, 2004).

The majority of the students used family and community social capital resources to gain knowledge and information, advice and opinion that facilitated their continuing with PCET or to gain encouragement and support to persist with and realise their aspirations. Use of family and community social capital resources had negative consequences for the realisation of the PCET aspirations of a minority of the students and was a factor linked with revising or abandoning of original aspirations. Conflicting norms and values regarding PCET among those in their networks resulted in different opinions about what the student should be doing and complicated students' decision making or more directly discouraged them from persisting with their aspirations. Previous research noting the inappropriate abandonment of goals when valued goals cannot be coordinated has already been mentioned in Chapters 1 and 3 (Dweck, 1996). The findings of this research, that about one-third of the students responded to the conflicting norms in their networks by revising or relinquishing their original aspirations, suggest that some form of student preparation for facing specific challenging situations such as this type of conflict may be a useful addition to school and college curriculum content.

Social capital in most students' family networks supported students to cope with a range of issues which challenged their commitment to their PCET aspirations and thus limited the effect of those challenges. These issues, listed in Chapter 5, included personal, study and financial issues, competing aspirations and demands, uncertainty, and changes of various kinds. The availability of this family support played an important role in encouraging almost half of the students to persist with and begin to realise their aspirations. The realisation of the aspirations of about one-third of the students was largely dependent upon the support they had received from family to deal with one or more of these issues. This was especially notable in terms of emotional support and practical assistance to deal with problems, including those arising from uncertainty and change caused by conflicting norms and values in students' families and communities regarding the value of PCET.

Most students' families were characterised by a preparedness to make financial sacrifices or to arrange family finances to enable the students' participation in PCET and realise their aspirations. Families were financially supporting students either totally or partially during PCET participation. Even where students were in receipt of a government allowance, many parents were contributing to the costs incurred. However, other rural families may have been unable to make such sacrifices or arrangements. Most students made reference to financial issues during their PCET participation. Just over half the students had part time employment suggesting a concern about financial issues or a need to take some responsibility for their financial support.

Families' desires for their sons and daughters to benefit from schooling and education, especially in terms of better futures and employment prospects than their own had been were evident, as discussed in the response to the first research question. Despite these, a minority of families unintentionally discouraged students' PCET participation simply because they did not know how to encourage their daughters and sons, except verbally and passively - by telling them about their experiences and expressing regret. Some families' perception of their role in their son's or daughter's PCET decision making as minor or less influential as a result of students' reaching the age of legal responsibility and their withdrawal from direct involvement was constructed by students as lack of interest and enthusiasm for their aspirations or a devaluing of the importance of those aspirations. As a result students gave less priority to those aspirations. These students may have been discouraged as a result of a social situation, where traditional social structures have collapsed and those remaining are failing to provide security and predictability (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (2002). Individuals now have to make choices about employment, study and relationships based on their own judgements, often before they have time to understand the full situation (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002 in White & Wyn, 2004, p.207).

The unintentional discouragement of students may be minimised or eliminated. If parents had access to appropriate knowledge they may develop more effective and active strategies to support and encourage their daughters and sons, and if they became aware of the effects of their arms-length stance they may adjust their behaviour to be more supportive and encouraging.

Families were well aware of the limitations of local employment opportunities, indicating that “there’s nothing here for them” and that opportunities were better outside the community. Despite this awareness prompting most families to encourage students to develop PCET aspirations, some were tempted when employment opportunities arose, to perceive the path to a better future only in the short term. This had a deleterious effect on a few students’ persistence with PCET aspirations. Many of the employment opportunities in these five rural areas are casual and insecure in nature. The experiences of three students who took employment immediately after completing Year 12, which are described in Chapter 5, illustrate this and highlight the fact that a first job is not necessarily setting a student on the path to a better future.

A high level of trust of family social capital resources resulted in a very small number of students lacking trust in sources outside the family and being reluctant or unwilling to use community social capital, as discussed in relation to the first research question. Three students’ close attachments to family meant that they perceived family as the only, or most important, source of social capital resources of use for their continued participation in PCET and they disregarded community social capital resources that may have provided additional assistance in realising their PCET aspirations.

Family networks reflecting a lesser valuing of PCET resulted in a different level and type of support for the students’ participation. As outlined in Chapters 5 and 6, a minority of the students had a close attachment to family who valued PCET less highly than the families of the majority of the students. Some of these families provided only minimal support for the students’ participation in Years 11 and 12, verbally agreeing with their aspirations and intentions with very little discussion. Most of these students experienced problems in making the transition to senior secondary study, but their parents did not become involved in resolving those problems. Some of these families were less supportive of the students’ post-Year 12 participation, for instance declaring the students’ original aspiration as financially impossible or not discouraging students’ attraction to immediate employment and financial independence after Year 12 when this was not their original intention. Such students felt either unable to continue or less encouraged and motivated to continue and several abandoned their post-Year 12 aspirations. Social capital in family

networks had the effect of modifying these students' original aspirations and limiting their experience of post-Year 12 education and training.

Community networks characterised by valuing of PCET and by support of students' participation provided social capital that was additional to family social capital and was important in encouraging the majority of the students to realise PCET aspirations. However, a minority of students had close attachments to people in the community who valued less highly or did not value PCET and were less supportive of their participation. Community factors played an important role in discouraging these students from realising their PCET aspirations.

The majority of the students had a close attachment to the community or to some part of that community, including teachers or others at school. The fact that a teacher or other non-family person was taking an interest in students' PCET participation strengthened students' commitment to their aspirations and increased the likelihood of realising them by reinforcing their high valuing of PCET and confirming that they had made a good choice. This finding supports earlier research on the role of the effective teacher in raising PCET aspirations and encouraging retention (Abbott-Chapman, Hughes, Holloway & Wyld, 1990). Some teachers believed that the expression of valuing of PCET by non-school people in the community was extremely beneficial for students. They believed students expected teachers to be promoting the advantages of PCET but did not have the same expectation of others in the community, thus enhancing the impact of those others' views. When others in the community as well as teachers held and expressed positive views regarding PCET participation there was a heightened effect on students.

As already noted, a quarter of the students had multiplex relationships with people in the community linking them to another adult in the community in more than one context (school and community group, neighbour and community group or employment and community group). The social capital which became available to them through those relationships, in terms of appropriable social organisation (Coleman, 1988; 1990) was helpful in assisting the students to persist with PCET. The students' longstanding relationships with these others in the community and their continued and regular expressions of interest in the students' PCET activities and progress all served to reinforce students' commitment to their aspirations and

increase their chance of realising those aspirations. People in some students' community group networks who valued PCET were able to provide very specific support that enabled the student to persist with and realise their aspirations. For instance, members of a community group provided a student with encouragement to continue to develop useful, subject-related skills and knowledge and remain focused on a post-Year 12 aspiration whilst studies were deferred. Those students who had received family encouragement were further encouraged to realise their aspirations by this additional community support.

Students' use of internal and external ties - or social capital in relationships with people within and outside the rural community - which is widely discussed in the literature had an impact on the realisation of their PCET aspirations. The balance between students' use of internal and external ties is useful in explaining some of the differences in students' realisation of their PCET aspirations. External ties were particularly useful to three quarters of the students who used them for the links they provided to information about studying at senior secondary college, the detail about everyday life and independent living in an urban centre and about employment and the labour market outside the rural area. This information prepared students to deal with their new circumstances studying and sometimes living in urban centres and was important in enabling to students' persist with and eventually realise their PCET aspirations. A minority of students with little or no family or community connection to PCET and who used only their internal ties were effectively restricting the knowledge they may gain about many aspects of relevance to their PCET participation, such as knowledge that may have better prepared them to cope with difficulties and remain committed to their PCET aspirations. As the discussion in Chapter 6 illustrated, several students used social capital available in limited networks and whilst some of these students were able to find all the resources they needed to successfully pursue their PCET aspirations, this was not the case for all of them. Most of the students whose limited networks included external ties had one of the two more successful PCET participation profile and the majority of those whose limited networks consisted of only internal ties had the less successful PCET participation profile.

The nature of the social capital available to students in family and community networks meant that the majority of the students did not experience low levels of

encouraging factors for continuing with PCET and most were not discouraged by barriers to participation. This was expected given the positive sample of students and is in contrast to the findings of James and colleagues (1999). This finding contradicts the cultural deficit theories which have often been applied to rural communities (e.g. Williams, Long, Carpenter & Hayden, 1993; Eslake, 2002) and reflects a changing of rural people's attitudes toward PCET. This change has been noted previously, in Chapter 6 and in response to the first research question.

Social capital available in family and community networks played a major role in encouraging the majority of students who may not have completed college or may not have continued to post-Year 12 education and training without the influence or involvement of people in their family and community networks. About half of the students sourced practical help from people in their networks and one-third relied on those in their networks for emotional support which helped them solve problems or deal with issues they encountered. Parents and/or older siblings were indispensable to several students in the ultimate realisation of a PCET aspiration. This was eventually achieved for some students as a result of detailed and specific discussions regarding the ways and means of realising aspirations, or by consistent and extended discussion and support of students who were experiencing difficulties in persisting with aspirations.

Although students were intrinsically motivated to persist with PCET and keen to do well in their studies, most students' commitment to their PCET aspirations was strengthened by encouragement from their families and further reinforced by encouragement from people in the community. Realisation of some students' aspirations would not have been possible without recourse to the social capital resources in their family and community networks. The majority of families of students participating in this research and most people in the five communities were characterised by an ability to assist students to persist with their aspirations and to convey their willingness to help students wherever possible to realise PCET aspirations.

However a minority of students were discouraged from realising their aspirations by the influence and/or experiences of others in their family or community networks who valued PCET less highly. A small number were not prepared to proceed with

aspirations that were contrary to their parents' wishes and a few modified their aspirations in order to maintain close friendships with peers who had chosen to discontinue education and training, take employment and remain in the community. When other factors such as employment availability, study fatigue, financial circumstances or competing non-education aspirations combined with family or community norms that valued PCET less highly there was a greater likelihood that students would be discouraged.

Those students who, through sharing norms and values and through development of trusting relationships were able to use both family and community social capital resources were effectively extending the range of resources to which they had access, and which were useful in developing and realising PCET aspirations. This was particularly advantageous where family networks were less useful sources.

Students who were more effective at using the social capital resources in their family and community networks - through awareness of a wide range of social capital available, through greater willingness to use family and community social capital and/or as a result of higher levels of personal, social and institutional trust – were more likely to have one of the two successful participation profiles than those who used a more limited range of social capital resources. This finding has implications for schools and colleges, families and communities. All can play a part by identifying and drawing to students' attention the unrecognised or unused sources of encouragement and support for those wishing to continue with PCET. Schools and colleges, families and communities can demonstrate to students how this encouragement and support operates, assist them to recognise the encouragement and support available and maximise its value in a way that does not demean students' own motivation and responsibility for their decision making. Such action would increase students' confidence in and trust of the education system, a necessary precursor to improving the process of encouraging students to continue with PCET.

Research Question 3: How useful is the concept of social capital in understanding rural students' post-compulsory education and training careers?

The literature review revealed the concept of social capital as an evolving one that is the subject of continuing discussion and debate in several disciplines. There are different views about what social capital is, how it operates, whether it is always

beneficial, and more (Productivity Commission, 2003). However there is much that is agreed upon, as outlined in Chapters 3 and 6, especially that social networks and norms are key elements of social capital and that trust is either another element or a close proxy for the level of social capital present in a community. Social capital is also widely regarded as a resource that people can use to achieve some of their objectives. Families, schools and communities have been identified in the literature as among the potential sources of social capital (e.g. OECD, 2001). On the basis of all of the above, the concept has the potential to be useful in explaining rural students' PCET careers.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Coleman's research (1988) showed the importance of social capital within the family for a child's educational outcome and established a link between the strength of relations between parents and child and the social capital available to the child from the parent. Likewise, the concept of social capital has contributed to understanding the family and community factors influencing these rural students' PCET decisions and experiences. It has been helpful in demonstrating and understanding how social factors operate to encourage the majority of students to develop, persist with and realise PCET aspirations and also how they discourage a minority of students in this. In particular, the concept of social capital has maximised the use of the rich ethnographic data that illustrated in great detail the choices, changes and challenges that students faced in pursuing PCET. It enabled the full exploitation of the phenomenological approach to exploring how students' made sense of their transition experiences and to learning students' stories about this defining stage of their lives.

Comments were made in Chapter 6 about the conceptual frameworks offered by previous researchers. Valuable insights were gained about the nature of the resources to which students had access through their personal networks through utilising Falk and Kilpatrick's concepts of knowledge and identity resources (2000). The different functions of bonding and bridging social capital and the distinctions between strong and weak ties were found to be worthwhile and useful in examining the ethnographic data. Some of those in students' networks gave them access to both bonding and bridging social capital. Family and friends who nurtured students' wellbeing, self-esteem and confidence and were an important part of who they were as human beings also linked almost two thirds of the students to opportunities and/or

were a crucial part of the students' getting ahead in life. Similarly, some of the people in students' networks who might be expected to give them access to bridging social capital, providing links to opportunities and being an important part of what it takes to get ahead in life, were also important in developing the self-esteem and confidence and shaping the identity of almost one-third of the students. This confirms research findings regarding the mix of bonding and bridging social capital that have recently been reported in the literature (Leonard & Onyx, 2003) and were discussed in Chapter 6.

As intimated at the beginning of the Chapter and confirmed in answering the two previous research questions, the data show that the people in students' networks were important influences on the development and realisation of their PCET aspirations. The thesis demonstrates that social capital and the underlying networks, norms and trust were important influences on the development and realisation of these rural students' PCET aspirations. Importantly, the thesis has highlighted that students' access to, awareness of, willingness to use, and ultimate utilisation of social capital resources made a difference to whether and how they followed through and realised their PCET aspirations. Students' trust of those holding social capital resources of use in pursuing PCET was central to their awareness, of, willingness to use and therefore use of that social capital.

The data identified a range of sources of social capital that had been useful in encouraging students' PCET aspirations. Family and community norms highly valuing PCET, and that were shared by students prepared many of them to expect to participate at that level. Other family norms and values facilitated or enabled students' participation despite a lesser valuing of PCET per se. However, family and community norms valuing and supporting participation mainly or exclusively for utilitarian reasons, provided social capital that was less useful in encouraging students to realise their PCET aspirations.

Chapter 6 revealed that family and community norms and values and the expectations others had of students were reflected in the differing combinations of push and pull factors which affected students' PCET participation. Push factors were the students' commitment to their PCET aspirations, their career attachment and the strength of family and community norms highly valuing PCET. Pull factors were the

strength of students' attachments to family, peers and rural locality and the counter attraction of employment immediately after Year 12 and of financial independence.

Family norms and values affected all students' attitudes toward education and schooling though the degree of effect varied. Mostly the effect was a positive one, as illustrated in Chapters 5 and 6, pushing students to develop positive attitudes toward school and education and to perceive PCET as a natural progression after completing high school. In a minority of instances, student perspectives indicated that there was some dissonance of student and family norms regarding PCET. About one-fifth of the students definitely regarded PCET more highly than their families and/or valued PCET for different, more varied and extensive reasons, as revealed by the discussion in Chapter 5 and 6 and the family push factor operated in more of an enabling capacity. For a very small number of students the absence of a push from the family negatively impacted on the students' PCET and one student was pulled away from post-Year 12 education and training participation by family. The pressures of community norms and values, like those of family mainly had a positive effect. Community members generally and especially those effective teachers in the schools pushed students to develop PCET aspirations, but a minority of students were drawn away from their original PCET aspirations by peers who had discontinued education and training.

The concept of social capital is helpful in understanding the different PCET experiences of individual students. Social capital resources in the relationships students had with parents, teachers, peers and others in the community assisted in the students' development and realisation of PCET aspirations. Relationships of the students with the two successful participation profiles were more effective in fulfilling this function for the students, than those of the students with the limited participation profile. With only one exception the relationships of the latter group were effective at least to some extent in encouraging students to develop PCET aspirations, and in realising aspirations for Year 11 and 12, but less successful in assisting students to realise post-Year 12 aspirations.

The concept of social capital provided a means of accounting for and integrating a range of family and community factors that influenced the development and realisation of these rural students PCET aspirations. It was a useful tool for

understanding students' post-school careers, especially in terms of their awareness of, willingness to use and use of the resources in their family and community networks, and for understanding the benefits of students' personal networks in encouraging or discouraging PCET aspirations and participation.

The data demonstrate that the concept of social capital is most useful in understanding the development of PCET aspirations of students expected to participate at that level, and of those students exposed to parental or other family regret over non-participation. The concept of social capital was found to be useful in understanding the majority of students' realisation of their aspirations and had strong explanatory power, either where family and community were highly supportive of participation or where family and community were less supportive or discouraging of participation.

The concept of social capital was less useful in understanding the PCET careers of a minority of students who were self-motivated and self-reliant, who had been less influenced by people in their families and communities when they were developing and realising their PCET aspirations and who grew up in families where PCET was not especially valued above other activities in which young people may engage after completing Year 10 or Year 12. A small number of students constructed their identity and interpreted their reality as strongly linked with participation in PCET with seemingly little reference to family norms and values and family education background. However, the concept had some potency as interview responses revealed that the families of three of these students were either totally supporting or making a considerable contribution to the student's financial support during the initial years of their participation in PCET. This reflects some valuing of PCET despite the students themselves making little reference to such family valuing. The PCET careers of this minority of students were best understood by their high level of intrinsic motivation, their high level of independence, the realism and appropriateness of their aspirations, and their academic ability.

This thesis demonstrates that social capital is a strong and compelling force influencing students' PCET careers, and has confirmed that social capital is not always beneficial. The findings incrementally advance our current understanding of how social capital operates for rural students. The complicated and inter-related

nature of social processes render social capital as only one part of the wider context in which students find themselves, and highlight the need to avoid simplistic examination of students' PCET experiences. The situations of students are complex and are understood not merely in terms of characteristics of students' family and community networks and the resources available within those networks, but also by how the resources are perceived by students, about students' willingness to use those resources and how resources are utilised by students in realising their PCET aspirations. Less prominent factors such as students' and families' financial concerns and students' emotional ties are inter-related and have an undeniable impact on the development and realisation of students' PCET aspirations.

The research has contributed to our understanding by identifying a range of sources of social capital in rural students' families and communities that have been useful in encouraging and in discouraging the students' PCET participation. It has further contributed to accumulating knowledge by suggesting how social capital operates to encourage students to develop and realise PCET aspirations. The research has illuminated the social structures, processes and means that have resulted in differing PCET outcomes for the students. It has contributed knowledge about how students use the social capital in different kinds of relationships for different purposes, notably their exploitation of external ties to link them to information about PCET, employment opportunities, the labour market and other aspects of life outside the rural community. The operation of social capital for rural students is suggested rather than stipulated due to the fact that "gaining a precise picture of the sources and determinants (of social capital) and how they operate is difficult. Among other reasons, there may be complex feedback effects between social capital, its sources and its effects" (Productivity Commission, 2003, p.23).

This research has contributed to social capital research and theory in two ways. By examining the role of social capital among rural students and presenting bona fide perceptions of the students themselves the research has filled a gap identified in recent research. Schaefer-McDaniel (2004) noted the paucity of studies investigating the role of social capital among young people and the neglect, in the existing studies, of young people's perspectives in preference to parent and teacher perspectives. In addition the research has added to the growing empirical evidence on social capital.

Limitations of the research

Some methodological issues had implications for, and placed limitations on the research. As mentioned in Chapter 1 the purposive sampling strategy chosen for the research restricts the generalisability of the findings to similar positive samples of rural school leavers who intend to pursue PCET, although findings are suggestive of more broadly applicable social capital factors at work among other school leaver samples. Comparative research on broader samples representative of whole cohorts of school leavers would be needed to test the validity of this assertion. The research was not designed to produce findings of broad and general usefulness and applicability, though wider potential may be suggested for some. The discussion in Chapter 1 also made clear that the researcher's role in this ethnographically-based research may tend to privilege a personal interpretation of the views of the participants interviewed in the research. To offset this, efforts were made to identify personal biases, values and interests and documented techniques were used to check the accuracy of findings with participants. It is accepted that other interpretations of the findings are possible. A limitation with regard to triangulation of data sources was that for a small number of the students there was no "encouraging other" interviewed in Phase 2 and therefore no data consistency check was possible in these few cases. As the discussion in Chapter 4 showed, this was unavoidable, and there was no suggestion that the data from these students was unreliable or not credible.

Discussion of students' experiences in Chapters 5 and 6 indicate that the research timeframe may not have been long enough to gain a full understanding of the complete process of transition from school to settled participation in a post-Year 12 education and training course for a small number of the students. However, as revealed by the discussion in Chapter 4, coverage of the full extent of change in, and interruption to, students' plans would have extended the data collection period unacceptably. Informal and later contact with most of these students, although not included in the research design, enabled some updating of student progress and did confirm students' continued participation in PCET.

Conclusions

The detailed examination of the experiences of these rural students, discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and above illustrates the number and the gravity of the physical, social and locational barriers that rural students face in order to participate in PCET. The

limited availability of PCET in rural schools, the need for geographical relocation, the costs associated with PCET participation, especially university participation, the costs of relocation or lengthy travelling to access PCET and the required separation from a familiar world of family, friends and the rural community into an unfamiliar world of strangers and the urban centre are daunting. Importantly, the loss of income whilst engaged in PCET - a loss shared by all students - assumes a greater importance for rural students because rural family incomes are generally lower than urban family incomes and because of the higher costs rural students incur in participating at that level in comparison with urban students. The discussion above has highlighted the fact that even with the high aspirations and encouragement described obstacles still remain to be overcome. Importantly, it reveals the resistance of the barriers and little erosion of some of them for individual students. It suggests there is a continuing need for research to identify strategies that may have an impact on reducing them, such as ensuring that rural students are well-prepared to face these particular challenges.

The data and discussion of findings suggest some career/future preparation programmes and practices in schools and colleges may need to be improved. Firstly, to provide career guidance and planning in a way more attuned to students' individual needs and secondly, to make the education system and societal expectation of students to become more independent in seeking career information more explicit to them and equip them with strategies to enable them to confidently do this. In a society that increasingly requires lifelong learning (Field, 2005) the development of students' skills in both seeking information and in taking responsibility for their own learning will be a sound investment and will better equip them for a future that includes continual learning.

The potential usefulness of the suggested modifications to school and college career/future preparation programmes is demonstrated by the success of similar efforts elsewhere. Initiatives introduced in Britain to widen higher education participation that were based on providing information and higher education-related experiences have been effective in encouraging young people to enter university (Maras, 2007). They were especially valuable for young people with the ability to continue to higher education but whose backgrounds may mean they or their families

may not have previously considered this as an option for them. Many Tasmanian rural students share similar experiences.

Recommendations for action

The close examination of the experiences of these rural students has illuminated some aspects of the transition experience that may not have previously been taken sufficiently into account. These aspects should perhaps now receive further attention in light of the thesis findings.

Recommendations made below have implications for action, educational policy and practices in rural schools, senior secondary colleges and also at the University of Tasmania. Recommendations focus on better preparation of parents and schools in working to encourage students to participate successfully in PCET and in increasing students' awareness and use of all available social capital resources in the school and community. Although these recommendations apply to students, parents and teachers from the five rural communities, they may have relevance in other Tasmanian rural communities and in other rural and regional areas in Australia.

One of the recommendations centres on improved preparation of pre-service teachers for teaching positions in rural schools in ways which will help them to understand the needs of rural school leavers and relate more closely to students' families. This may assist in preparing students more thoroughly and effectively for continued participation in PCET, both immediately after the end of compulsory schooling and further into the future. The development of curriculum in university education courses to include more specific content on rural school teaching is likely to have wider application in other Australian universities.

1. Establishment of a school-family liaison position

The establishment of a government-funded, part time school-family liaison position attached to rural schools should be considered. Positions such as this are an example of school-community partnerships which are widely regarded as important in improving a range of students' educational outcomes (e.g. Ruge, 2003; Department of Education, Science and Training, 2004) and suggested as useful in low socio-economic communities (e.g. New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2003).

The appointment should preferably be a parent or ex-parent of a student or students from the school, who is familiar with and trusted by parents and community members. The role should focus on providing parents with up-to-date practical information and advice on PCET opportunities available, government and private sector student financial assistance including schemes directed especially at retention of rural and isolated students, and parent peer support in investigating and discussing all available post-school options. Such support would more thoroughly and effectively prepare parents to encourage students to participate in all forms of PCET and overcome any diffidence on the part of parents in seeking appropriate help for their son or daughter in pursuit of PCET aspirations from both teachers and government instrumentalities.

A school-family liaison person appointed from within the community is likely to be most effective when personally known to and trusted by many students and their families. Such a person would be perceived as an intermediary figure, working with and for parents, parent bodies such as the school Parents and Friends Association and the school, and a more accessible source of career/future knowledge and information. A dedicated position with responsibility for the delivery of career/future information in combination with school programmes would provide flexibility of sources and cater for some rural students' preferences for receiving information from family, or someone with whom they felt some familiarity or similarity. The use of ex-students from the school alluded to in Chapter 6 would especially facilitate this. The school-family liaison position would both utilise and help to strengthen existing social capital resources and links between schools, their surrounding community and the urban senior secondary colleges, thus building students' and families' familiarity with and trust of urban senior secondary colleges and the education system. The incumbent should have a presence in the rural community and senior secondary colleges to be accessible to school and college students, parents and school and college teachers thus enabling the development of trusting relationships with them.

The establishment of a school-family liaison position would facilitate improved interpretation of career/future knowledge and information that was indicated as necessary in findings discussed earlier in this Chapter in response to the first research question. It would also assist students and families to more effectively utilise the social capital resources in the school and community which the discussion of

findings in Chapter 6 revealed were on the whole encouraging and supportive of students' PCET participation.

2. Pre-service preparation for rural teaching

As mentioned in Chapter 1 a first posting to a rural school is a common occurrence for newly-qualified teachers employed by the Tasmanian Department of Education. The data regarding high teacher turnover in rural schools and the particular culture in rural schools combine with this to suggest that a more specific and thorough preparation for teaching in Tasmanian rural schools should be a component of Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Teaching degrees at the University of Tasmania. The course content of both degrees should provide prospective teachers with detailed information about the issues facing rural students and schools, an opportunity to discuss these issues with teachers currently practising in rural schools and broader opportunities to take part in the Practicum in a rural or isolated school. This would better inform and familiarise pre-service teachers with many positive as well as challenging aspects of teaching in rural schools.

The need for specialised preparation and selection of teachers for rural areas in Australia which were described as “unique and demanding situations” was flagged in the mid-1990s (Gibson, 1993; 1994). This arose from beginning teachers' perceptions of requiring better preparation and the need to bring practice into line with national policy statements on equity and social justice concerns for rural schooling (Gibson, 1993). More recent research in New South Wales has identified key inclusions for a pre-service rural teacher education programme and put forward recommendations for course content (Boylan, 2005) and also sought greater understanding of how people become good rural teachers, specifically how they learn rural pedagogies (The Bush Tracks Research Collective, 2006). More effective preparation of teachers for teaching in rural schools will have many and far-reaching benefits. In addition to teachers being more informed about the schools and communities that they are joining, they may also experience a smoother and perhaps less problematic entry into their career. These benefits will flow on to the students they teach and the education system will gain from a reduction in teacher turnover in rural schools. Since schools and teachers have been identified by the research as important sources of social capital resources these factors would clearly impact on improved student learning outcomes and post-school careers.

The possibility of providing similar preparation for rural teaching via university in-service courses should also be considered. This preparation would be of interest and value to practising teachers who were contemplating teaching in a rural school and those who were transferred to rural schools.

3. Change of emphasis in school career/future preparation programmes

A change of emphasis in school career preparation programmes is recommended in order to assist students to become aware of career and future decision making as one of several components of overall decision-making and as one that is integral to their health and wellbeing. Rather than presenting PCET aspirations as those to be given priority by students - perhaps impossible and unrealistic for some - it is suggested that schools and colleges encourage and enable students to view educational aspirations within the broader context of holistic life goals by educating them in life career planning and decision making. As Stokes and Wyn have indicated

Young people's narratives convey a multi-layered world that includes family life and other personal relationships, employment and leisure and lifestyle priorities (Stokes & Wyn, 2007 p.497).

Students in Stokes' and Wyn's research have shown that they need more help in negotiating their way along the many ups and downs, twists and turns that make up their life narrative. The data in this research have confirmed this situation for this sample of Tasmanian young people. By encouraging students to incorporate rather than suppress or deny consideration of other life aspirations and priorities they may have, schools and colleges should assist in bringing an element of reality into students' decision making processes. In addition, this approach will bring to the forefront and clarify in students' minds the link between their future health and wellbeing and participation in PCET, obtaining qualifications and improved employment prospects. Students may be more likely to aspire to PCET and persist with aspirations by perceiving these decisions as part of their overall decision making and as important in assuring their health and wellbeing. This change may encourage students to adopt a longer term perspective in their decision making which would include the wider range of benefits associated with PCET participation, rather than valuing only the employment-related benefits.

The change of emphasis would allow teachers to introduce to students the various challenges to PCET aspirations, the changes needed to realise aspirations, the conflicts between aspirations and other interests and the fluidity of aspirations. Discussion of these elements would prepare students more effectively and realistically for what lies ahead by assisting them to develop in advance strategies to deal with those challenges, changes and conflicts.

Suggestions for further research

Several avenues for further research were highlighted by this thesis.

- The findings indicate that the replication of this study among a wider sample of students would be of value. It is suggested that the same intensive methods are used to examine the experiences of a larger and representative sample of all rural Year 10 leavers in selected schools rather than only those intending to continue. This would provide additional knowledge about the social capital resources available to all rural students in these and other Tasmanian rural communities and provide a comparison of the differences in availability and access to social capital of those who do continue and those who do not.
- Further longitudinal research is suggested which would follow students through to the completion of a first PCET qualification. The design of this research did not permit this but longitudinal research that extends the investigation over a five-year period will provide a long term perspective and insights into students' access to and use of social capital over time. A more holistic understanding of the entirety of students' PCET experiences and later careers would add to the insights gained from the research in this thesis.
- This research has revealed the importance of students' and families' social and institutional trust in the development of students' PCET aspirations, to their participation in PCET and to the realisation of students' PCET aspirations. Further research investigating more closely exactly how rural students and families build social and institutional trust would add valuable insights to the understanding of rural students' PCET experiences and careers.

References

- Abbott-Chapman, J. (1998) *Support for Students' Studies: Everyone's business*. Report of a survey commissioned by the Assistant Registrar, Students Services Section and the Academic Registrar, University of Tasmania. Hobart: University of Tasmania.
- Abbott-Chapman, J. (2002) *Characteristics of First Year Students in all Faculty of Education Programs 2001 and 2002*. Hobart: Youth Studies Group, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania.
- Abbott-Chapman, J. & Baynes, H. (2002) All in the Family: Use of the modified snowball technique. *Journal of Qualitative Research*. 2 (3). 30-44.
- Abbott-Chapman, J., Easthope, G. & O'Connor, P. (1997) The Influence of Student Gender and Parental Socio-economic Status on Post-school Career Paths. *Australian Journal of Social Research*. 4 (1). 3-26. Dec.
- Abbott-Chapman, J., Hughes, P., Holloway, G. & Wyld, C. (1990) *Identifying the Qualities and Characteristics of the "Effective" Teacher: Report 1*. Hobart: Youth Education Studies Centre, University of Tasmania.
- Abbott-Chapman, J., Hughes, P. & Wyld, C. (1991) *Improving Access of Disadvantaged Youth to Higher Education*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Abbott-Chapman, J., Hughes, P. & Wyld, C. (1992) *Changes and Challenges in Senior Secondary Education in Tasmania 1982 to 1991*. Hobart: Youth Education Studies Unit, University of Tasmania.
- Abbott-Chapman, J. & Kilpatrick, S. (2001) Improving Post-school Outcomes for Rural School Leavers. *Australian Journal of Education*. 45 (1). 35-47.
- Ainley, J., Malley, J. & Lamb, S. (1997) *Australian Background Report prepared for the Thematic Review of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life*. Melbourne: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- Alloway, N., Dalley, L., Patterson, A., Walker, K. & Lenoy, M. (2004) *School Students Making Education and Career Decisions: Aspirations, attitudes and influences*. Final Report to the Department of Education, Science and Training. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Alston, M. (2002) Social Capital in Rural Australia. *Rural Society*. 12 (2). 93-104.
- Alston, M. & Kent, M. (2003) Educational Access for Australia's Rural Young People: A case of social exclusion. *Australian Journal of Education*. 47 (1). 5-17.
- Andres Bellamy, L. (1993) "Life Trajectories, Action, and Negotiating the Transition from High School." Chapter 9 in Anisef, P. & Axelrod, P. (Eds.) *Transitions: Schooling and employment in Canada*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc. pp.137-157.

- Andrews, L. (1999) *Does HECS Deter? Factors affecting university participation by low SES groups*. Occasional Paper Series 99-F. Canberra: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.
- Archer, L. & Hutchings, M. (2000) Bettering Yourself? Discourses of risk, cost and benefit in ethnically diverse, young working-class non-participants' constructions of higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 21 (4). 555-574.
- Athanasou, J.A. (2001) Young People in Transition: Factors influencing the educational-vocational pathways of Australian school leavers. *Education and Training*. 43 (2/3). 132-138.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. (1970; 1975; 1980; 1985; 1990; 1995; 2000; 2005) *Schools, Australia*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. (Cat. No. 4221.0)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. (1990) *Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC)*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. (1992-2000) *Schools, Australia*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. (Cat. No. 4221.0)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. (1994-2001) *Australian Social Trends*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. (2001) *Schools Australia*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. (Cat. No. 4221.0)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. (2005a) *Regional Population Growth, Australia and New Zealand 2003-04*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia (Cat. No. 3218.0)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. (2005b) *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery, Monthly*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia (Cat. No. 6291.0.55.001). Retrieved December 9, 2005, from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats>
- Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. (2008) *Schools Australia*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Australian Education Council [AEC]. (1991) *Young People's Participation in Post-Compulsory Education and Training*. Report of the Australian Education Council Review Committee (Chair: B. Finn). Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Australian National Opinion Polls [ANOP]. (1993) *N.S.W. Year 10-12 Students' Attitudes to Post-Compulsory Education and Training*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Australian National Opinion Polls [ANOP]. (1994) *Young Peoples' Attitudes to Post-Compulsory Education and Training*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

- Batten, M., Withers, G., Thomas, C. & McCurry, D. (1991) *Senior Students Now: The challenges of retention*. Melbourne: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- Baynes, H. (2005) Family and Community Factors Encouraging Study Resilience among Tasmanian Year 10 Rural High School Students: An exploration of social capital. *Proceedings of the Australian Association for Research in Education International Conference, 2004, Doing the Public Good: Positioning education research*. Melbourne: Australian Association for Research in Education.
- Baynes, H., Kilpatrick, S. & Abbott-Chapman, J. (2002) *Youth Participation in Education and Training, and Factors Affecting Participation*. Launceston: Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, University of Tasmania.
- Beavis, A., Murphy, M., Bryce, J. & Corrigan, M. (2004) *Post-School Plans, Aspirations, Expectations and Implementation*. Melbourne: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a new modernity*. (Ritter, M. Transl.) London: Sage. (Original work published 1944).
- Beck, U. & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002) *Individualisation*. Sage; London.
- Beck, U & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002) in White, R. & Wyn, J. (2005) *Youth and Society: Exploring the social dynamics of youth experience*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press. p.207.
- Behrens, N., O'Grady, J., Hodgson, S., Hoult, P. & Hughes, A. (1978). *The Huon Valley Study: Opportunities and educational priorities in a Tasmanian Country Area*. Hobart: Department of Education, Tasmania.
- Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Garden City: Anchor Books.
- Berndt, T.J. & Keefe, K. (1996) Friends' Influence on School Adjustment: A motivational analysis. Chapter 11 in Juvonen, J. & Wentzel, K.R. *Social Motivation: Understanding children's school adjustment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.248-278.
- Bogdan, R.C. & Biklen, S.K. (1992) *Qualitative Research for Education*. (2nd Ed.) Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986) The Forms of Capital. Chapter 9 in J. G. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York, Westport, Connecticut & London: Greenwood Press. pp.241-258.
- Bourke, L. & Geldens, P.M. (2006) Subjective Wellbeing and its Meaning for Young People in a Rural Australian Center. *Social Indicators Research*. 82. 165-187.
- Bovaird, T. & Loeffler, E. (2005) Communities, Trust and Local Governance Failure. Chapter 8 in Watson, S. & Moran, A (Eds.) *Trust, Risk and Uncertainty*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. pp.143-162.

- Bowers-Brown, T. (2006) Widening Participation in Higher Education amongst Students from Disadvantaged Socio-economic Groups. *Tertiary Education and Management*. 12. 59-64.
- Boylan, C.R. (2005) Putting Rural into Pre-service Teacher Education. *Proceedings of the Australian Association for Research in Education International Conference, 2004, Doing the Public Good: Positioning education research*. Melbourne: Australian Association for Research in Education.
- Braithwaite, J. (1987) Influences Affecting School Students' Staying or Leaving Decisions in the Postcompulsory Years. *Curriculum and Teaching*. 2 (1&2). 3-15.
- Bullen, P & Onyx, J. (2005) *Measuring Social Capital in Five Communities in NSW: A practitioner's guide*. Coogee, NSW: Management Alternatives.
- Burns, R. B. (2000) *Introduction to Research Methods*. (4th Ed.) Frenchs Forest: Longman.
- Caplan, G. (1974) *Support Systems and Community Mental Health*. New York: Behavioral Publications.
- Charmaz, K. (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory: A practical guide through qualitative Analysis*. London: Sage Publications.
- Chenoweth, E. & Galliher, R.V. (2004) Factors Influencing College Aspirations of Rural West Virginia High School Students. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*. 19 (2).1-14.
- Choate, J., Cunningham, R., Abbott-Chapman, J., & Hughes, P. (1992) *Rural Disadvantage and Post Compulsory Participation: Parents' views of school and work*. Hobart: Youth Education Studies Centre, University of Tasmania.
- Coleman, J. S. (1988) Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *The American Journal of Sociology* 94. S95-S120.
- Coleman, J. S. (1990) *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge: Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press.
- Collins, C., Kenway, J. & Mcleod, J. (2000) *Factors Influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females in School and their Initial Destinations after Leaving School*. Canberra: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Analysis and Equity Branch.
- Collins, P.H. (1986) in Olesen, V.L. *Feminisms and Qualitative Research at and into the Millennium*. Chapter 8 in Denzin, N.K.. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (2nd Ed.) Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc. pp.215-255.
- Cotterell, J. (1996) *Social Networks and Social Influences in Adolescence*. London: Routledge.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Creswell, J.W. (2003) *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (2nd Ed.)* Thousand Oaks. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. (2005) *Educational Research: Planning, coordinating and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research. (2nd Ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education International.
- Croll, P. (2004) Families, Social Capital and Educational Outcomes. *British Journal of Educational Studies*. 52 (4). 390-416.
- Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. St. Leonards, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin.
- Crowther, F. & Wilkes, P. (1995) Community Partnerships: A response to values confusion? Chapter 5 in Limerick, B. & Nielson, H. (Eds.) *School and Community Relations: Participation, policy and practice*. Sydney, London: Harcourt Brace. pp.69-80.
- Cullen, R.B. (1998) *Benchmarking Australian Qualifications Profiles Report No. 3*. Brisbane: Australian National Training Authority.
- Cummins, J. (1993) What Country People Think about Universities. A fair chance for All in Access to Higher Education: Consolidation and advancement into the 21st century. *Australia's First Conference on Equity and Access in Higher Education*. University of Newcastle, New South Wales.
- Cunningham, R., Choate, J., Abbott-Chapman, J., & Hughes, P. (1992) *Rural Disadvantage & Post Compulsory Participation*. Hobart: Youth Education Studies Centre, University of Tasmania.
- Curtain, R. (1998) *Business Response to Youth Unemployment: Need for a national strategy*. Unpublished report. Melbourne: Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry.
- Curtain, R. (2001) *How Young People are Faring: Key indicators 2001*. Retrieved February 6, 2002 from <http://www.dsf.org.au>
- Darnell, F. & Simpson, P.M. (Eds.) (1981) *Rural Education: In pursuit of excellence*. Nedlands, W.A: National Centre for Research on Rural Education, University of Western Australia.
- Dawkins, J.S. (1988a) *Strengthening Australia's Schools: A consideration of the focus and content of schooling*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Dawkins, J.S. (1988b) *A New Commitment To Higher Education in Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Dawkins, J.S. & Holding, A.C. (1987) *Skills for Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Denscombe, M. (1998) *The Good Research Guide*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

- Denzin, N.K. (1978) *The Research Act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. (2nd Ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (2nd Ed.) Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Department of Education, Tasmania [DET]. (1999) *Post-compulsory Education in Tasmania. Draft recommendations of the working party*. Hobart: Department of Education, Tasmania.
- Department of Education, Tasmania [DET]. (2002) *2001 Year 10 Destination Survey: Report on the 2002 destinations of the full cohort of 2001 Year 10 students in Tasmanian schools*. Hobart: Department of Education, Tasmania.
- Department of Education, Tasmania [DET]. (2004a) *Early School Leaving in Tasmania: Origins and Outcomes: Report based on the results from the 2001 Year 10 cohort study*. Hobart: Department of Education, Tasmania.
- Department of Education, Tasmania [DET]. (2004b) *2001 Year 10 Destination Survey: Report on the 2003 destinations of the full cohort of 2001 Year 10 students in Tasmanian schools*. Hobart: Department of Education, Tasmania.
- Department of Education, Tasmania [DET]. (2005) *School Life - information for parents, carers and the community*. Information retrieved December 2, 2005 from <http://www.parentinfo.education.tas.gov.au>
- Department of Education, Science and Training. (2004) *Home, School and Community Partnerships to Support Children's Numeracy*. Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.
- Department of Education, Training & Youth Affairs [DETYA], Higher Education Division. (1999) *Equity in Higher Education*. Occasional Paper No. 99-A Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Department of Employment, Education and Training [DEET]. (1990) *A Fair Chance for All: Higher education that's within everyone's reach*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Department of Employment, Education and Training [DEET]. (1994) *Young People's Attitudes to Post-compulsory Education and Training (1994)*. Occasional Paper No. 11 Higher Education Series. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Department of Health and Aged Care. (2001) *Measuring Remoteness: Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA)*. Occasional Papers New Series Number 14. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Retrieved October 31, 2005, from www.health.gov.au/publicat.htm
- Department of Primary Industries and Energy and Department of Human Services and Health (1994) *Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas Classification: 1991 Census Edition*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Dey, I. (1999) *Grounding Grounded Theory: Guidelines for qualitative inquiry*. San Diego: Academic Press.

- Dusseldorp Skills Forum (2002) *Honouring Our Commitment*. A Policy Paper about Realising Australia's Commitment to Young People. Ultimo: Dusseldorp Skills Forum.
- Dusseldorp Skills Forum. (2003) *How Young People are Faring: Key indicators 2003*. Glebe: Dusseldorp Skills Forum.
- Dusseldorp Skills Forum. (2005) *How Young People are Faring: Key indicators 2005*. Glebe: Dusseldorp Skills Forum.
- Dweck, C. S. (1996) Social Motivation: Goals and social-cognitive processes. A comment. Chapter 8 in Juvonen, J. & Wentzel, K. R. (Eds.) *Social Motivation: Understanding children's school adjustment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.181-195.
- Dwyer, P. J. (1994) Continuities in Educational Inequalities. *New Education*. 16 (1). 72-80.
- Dwyer, P. & Wyn, J. (2001) *Youth, Education and Risk: Facing the future*. London: Routledge Farmer.
- Eslake, S. (2002) Tapping Power of the Creative Class. *The Saturday Mercury*. October 26, pp.22-23.
- Falk, I., & Kilpatrick, S. (2000) What is Social Capital? A study of interaction in a rural community. *Sociologia Ruralis*. 40. 87-110.
- Field, J. (2005) *Social Capital and Lifelong Learning*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Field, J., Schuller, T. & Baron, S. (2000) Social Capital and Human Capital Revisited. Chapter 14 in Baron, S., Field, J. & Schuller, T. (Eds.) *Social Capital: Critical perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp.243-263.
- Floyd, C. (1996) Achieving Despite the Odds: A study of resilience among a group of African American high school seniors. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 65 (2). 181-190. Spring.
- Frank, J. (2003) Making Social Capital Work for Public Policy. *Horizons*. 6 (3). 3-6
- Frydenberg, F. (1997) *Adolescent Coping: Theoretical and research perspectives*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Fukuyama, F. (1995) *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity*. New York: Free Press Paperbacks.
- Fuller, A., McGraw, K. & Goodyear, M. (1999) Bungy Jumping through Life: What young people say promotes well-being and resilience. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*. 9 (1). 159-168. August.
- Fullerton, S., Walker, M., Ainley, J. & Hillman, K. (2003) *Patterns of Participation in Year 12*. Research Report No. 33. Melbourne: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- Geertz, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

- Gibson, I.W. (1993) Policy, Practice and Need in the Professional Preparation of Teachers for Rural Teaching: An Australian perspective. *Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education*, Fremantle 22-25 November.
- Gibson, I.W. (1994) Policy, Practice and Need in the Professional Preparation of Teachers for Rural Teaching: An Australian perspective. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*. 10 (1). 68-77. Spring.
- Gittell, R. & Vidal, A. (1998) *Community Organisation: Building social capital as a development strategy*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Gluckman, M. (1967) in Coleman, J.S. (1988) Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *The American Journal of Sociology*. 94. S95-S120.
- Golding, B. & Pattison, S. (2004) Inequity in Australian Vocational Education and Training by Location. Chapter 6 in Bowman, K. (Ed.) *Equity in Vocational Education and Training: Research readings*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd. pp.108-119.
- Golding, B & Volkoff, V. (1999) *Creating Outcomes: Individuals and groups on the VET journey. Volumes 1 & 2*. Melbourne: Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne.
- Gorard, S., Rees, G. & Fevre, R. (1999) Patterns of Participation in Lifelong Learning: Do families make a difference? *British Educational Research Journal*. 25 (4). 517-532.
- Granovetter, M.S. (1973) The Strength of Weak Ties. *The American Journal of Sociology*. 78 (6). 1360-1380.
- Green, A., Hodgson, A., Sakamoto, A. & Spoors, K. (1999) *Research Report of CEDEFOP on Financing VET (Draft)*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.
- Greenbaum, T.L. (2000) *Moderating Focus Groups: A practical guide for group facilitation*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Greenglass, E. (1993) The Contribution of Social Support to Coping Strategies. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*. 42 (4). 323-340.
- Haberkorn, G., Kelson, S., Tottenham, R. & Magpantay, C. (2004) *Country Matters: Social atlas of rural and regional Australia*. Canberra: Bureau of Rural Science.
- Hall, D. & Thomas, H. (2005) Collaborative Activity between School and College Sixth Forms and Higher Education Institutions. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*. 10 (2). 183-197.
- Halpern, D. (2005) *Social Capital*. Cambridge, U.K: Polity Press.
- Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (1995) *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. (2nd. Ed.) London and New York: Routledge.

- Hanifan, L.J. (1916) The Rural School Community Center. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 67. 130-138.
- Hannan, B., Ferguson, S., Pollock, J. & Reeders, E. (1995) *Charting a Course: Students' views of their future*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Harvey-Beavis, A. & Robinson, L. (2000) *Views and Influences. Tertiary education, secondary students and their advisers*. Canberra: Department of Education, Training & Youth Affairs, Evaluations and Investigations Programme, Higher Education Division.
- Hatt, S., Baxter, A. & Tate, J. (2005) Who Benefits from Widening Participation? A study of targeting in the south west of England. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. 29 (4). 341-351. Nov.
- Heidegger, M. (1959) *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1962) *Being and Time*. London: SCM Press.
- Hemsley-Brown, J. (1999) College Choice: Perceptions and priorities. *Educational Management & Administration* 27 (1) 85-98.
- Higher Education Council. (1996) *Diversity and Excellence: Advancing the national higher education framework*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Hillman, K. (2005) *The First Year Experience: The transition from secondary school to university and TAFE in Australia*. Melbourne: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- Hofferth, S.L. & Iceland, J. (1998) Social Capital in Rural and Urban Communities. *Rural Sociology*. 63 (4). 574-598.
- Horvat, E.M., Weininger, E.B. & Lareau, A. (2003) From Social Ties to Social Capital: Class differences in the relations between schools and parent networks. *American Educational Research Journal*. 40 (2). 319-351.
- Howard, S. & Johnson, B. (2000) What Makes the Difference? Children and teachers talk about resilient outcomes for children 'at risk'. *Educational Studies*. 26 (3). 321-337. September.
- Howard, S. & Johnson, B. (2001) *Promoting Resilience in Young People: The role of the family, the school and the community*. Adelaide: University of South Australia.
- Hughes, P., Bellamy, J. & Black, A. (2000) Building Social Trust through Education. Chapter 9 in I. Winter (Ed.) *Social Capital, Active Citizenship and Political Equality in Australia*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies/Commonwealth of Australia. pp.225-249.
- Hymel, S., Comfort, C., Schonert-Reichel, K. & McDougall, P. (1996) Academic Failure and School Dropout: The influence of peers. Chapter 13 in Juvonen, J.,

- & Wentzel, K. R. (Eds.) *Social Motivation: Understanding children's school adjustment*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press. pp.313-345.
- Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission (Chairman, P. Karmel). (1973) *Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, Schools in Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Israel, G. D., Beaulieu, L. J., & Hartless, G. (2001) The Influence of Family and Community Social Capital on Educational Achievement. *Rural Sociology*. 66 (1). 43-68.
- James, R. (2000) *TAFE, University or Work? The early preferences and choices of students in Years 10, 11 and 12*. Leabrook, South Australia: Australian National Training Authority.
- James, R. (2002) *Socio-economic Background and Higher Education Participation: An analysis of school students' aspirations and expectations*. Melbourne: Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne.
- James, R., Wyn, J., Baldwin, G., Hepworth, G., McInnis, C. & Stephanou, A. (1999) *Rural and Isolated School Students and their Higher Education Choices: A re-examination of student location, socio-economic background and educational advantage and disadvantage*. Melbourne: Centre for the Study of Higher Education and Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne.
- Janesick, V.J. (2000) The Choreography of Qualitative Research Design. Chapter 13 in Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc. pp.379-399.
- Jones, P. (2003) *Introducing Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Karmel, T. (2007) Vocational Education and Training in Australian Schools. *The Australian Educational Researcher*. 34 (3). 101-111.
- Kettley, N. (2007) The Past, Present and Future of Widening Participation Research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 28 (3). 333-347. May.
- Khattari, N., Riley, K.W. & Kane, M.B. (1997) Students at Risk in Poor, Rural Areas: A review of the research. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*. 13 (2). 79-100. Fall.
- Khoo, S.T. & Ainley, J. (2005) *Attitudes, Intentions and Participation*. Camberwell, Victoria: The Australian Council for Educational Research. Ltd.
- Kilpatrick, S. & Abbott-Chapman, J. (2002) Rural Young People's Work/study Priorities and Aspirations: The influence of family social capital. *The Australian Educational Researcher*. 29 (1). 43-69.
- Kilpatrick, S., Abbott-Chapman, J. & Baynes, H. (2002) *Youth Participation in Education: A review of trends, targets and influencing factors*. Launceston: Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, University of Tasmania.

- Kilpatrick, S., Field, J. & Falk, I. (2003) Social Capital: An analytical tool for exploring lifelong learning and community development. *British Educational Research Journal*. 29 (3). 417-433.
- Kilpatrick, S., Johns, S., Mulford, B., Falk, I. & Prescott, L. (2002) *More Than an Education: Leadership for rural school-community partnerships*. Barton: A.C.T. Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation.
- Kilpatrick, S., Williamson, J. & Thrush, M. (1999) *Access and Equity within Education and Training for People in Rural and Remote Australia*. Paper R3/1999 in the CRLRA Reprint Series. Launceston: Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, University of Tasmania.
- Lamb, S., Dwyer, P., & Wyn, J. (2000) *Non-completion of School in Australia: The changing patterns of participation and outcomes*. Melbourne: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- Lamb, S., Long, M. & Malley, J. (1998) *Vocational Education and Training in Australia: An analysis of participation and outcomes using longitudinal survey data*. Melbourne: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- Lamb, S., Walstab, A., Teese, R., Vickers, M. & Rumberger, R. (2004) *Staying on at School: Improving student retention in Australia*. Brisbane: The State of Queensland/Department of Education and the Arts.
- LeCompte, M.D. & Preissle, J. with Tesch, R (1993) *Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research*. (2nd. Ed.) San Diego: Academic Press.
- Leonard, R. & Onyx, J. (2003) Networking Through Loose and Strong Ties: An Australian qualitative study. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations*. 14 (2). 189-203. June.
- Levin, B.W. & Browner, C.H. in Wyn, J. (2007) Learning to 'Become Somebody Well': Challenges for educational policy. *The Australian Educational Researcher*. 34 (3). 35-52. Dec.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985) *Naturalistic Enquiry*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Looker, E.D. (1993) Interconnected Transitions and their Costs: Gender and urban/rural differences in the transition to work. Chapter 3 in Anisef, P. & Axelrod, P. (Eds.) *Transitions: Schooling and employment in Canada*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc. pp.43-64.
- Looker, E.D. & Dwyer, P. (1998) Education and Negotiated Reality: Complexities facing rural youth in the 1990s. *Journal of Youth Studies*. 1 (1). 5-22.
- Lynch, K. & O'Riordan, C. (1998) Inequality in Education: A study of class barriers. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 19 (4). 445-478.
- Malpas, J. (2008) Place and Human Being. Chapter 31 in Vanclay, F., Higgins, M. & Blackshaw, A. (Eds.) *Making Sense of Place: Exploring concepts and expressions of place through different senses and lenses*. Canberra: National Museum of Australia Press. pp.325-331.

- Mannheim, K. (1949) *Ideology and Utopia: An introduction to the sociology of knowledge*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Maras, P. (2007) But No-one in my Family has been to University' Aiming Higher: School students' attitudes to higher education. *The Australian Educational Researcher*. 34 (3). 69-90.
- Marjoribanks, K. (1992) Family Capital, Children's Individual Attributes, and Academic Achievement. *The Journal of Psychology*. 126 (5). 529-538.
- Marjoribanks, K. (1998) Family Background, Social and Academic Capital, and Adolescents' Aspirations: A mediational analysis. *Social Psychology of Education*. 2 (2). 177-197.
- Marks, G. N., Fleming, N., Long, M. & McMillan, J. (2000) *Patterns of Participation in Year 12 and Higher Education in Australia: Trends and issues*. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd..
- Maxwell, J.A. (1996) *Qualitative Research Design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- McGonigal, J., Doherty, R., Allan, J., Mills, S., Catts, R., Redford, M., McDonald, A., Mott, J. & Buckley, C. (2007) Social Capital, Social Inclusion and Changing School Contexts: A Scottish perspective. *British Journal of Educational Studies*. 55 (1). 77-94. March.
- McKenzie, P. (2000) *Pathways for Youth in Australia*. Working Paper No. 3, September. Melbourne: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- McMillan, J. (2005) *Course Change and Attrition from Higher Education*. Melbourne: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- McMillan, J. & Marks, G.N. (2003) *School Leavers in Australia: Profiles and pathways*. Melbourne: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- Merleau-Ponty, M (1962) *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Merriam, S.B. (1998) *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs. (1999) *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First century*. Retrieved November 8, 2001, from <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/nationalgoals/natgoals.htm>
- Morse, J. M. (1991) in Creswell, J.W. (2003) *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. (2nd. Ed.) Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Moustakas, C. (1994) *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Munn, P. (2000) Social Capital, Schools, and Exclusions. Chapter 9 in Baron, S., Field, J. & Schuller, T. (Eds.) *Social Capital: Critical perspectives*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. pp.168-181.
- Narayan, D. & Cassidy, M.F. (2001) A Dimensional Approach to Measuring Social Capital: Development and validation of a social capital inventory. *Current Sociology*. 49 (2). 59-102.
- National Board of Employment, Education and Training [NBEET]. (1995) *Students' Attitudes towards Careers and Post-school Options for Education, Training and Employment*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research [NCVER]. (2003) *Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics: Students and courses, 2002. At a glance*. Retrieved December 2, 2005, from <http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/vet/ann02/glance02>
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research [NCVER]. (2008) *Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics: Students and courses, 2007*. Retrieved July 20, 2008 from www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/vet/ann07/students_courses2007.xls
- Neuman, W. L. (2003) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. (5th. Ed.) Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- New South Wales Department of Education and Training. (2003) *Home, School and Community Partnerships*. Darlinghurst, New South Wales: New South Wales Department of Education and Training.
- Nooteboom, B. (2007) Social Capital, Institutions and Trust. *Review of Social Economy*. LXV (1). 29-53.
- Onyx, J. & Bullen, P. (2000) Sources of Social Capital. Chapter 5 in Winter, I. (Ed.) *Social Capital and Public Policy in Australia*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies/Commonwealth of Australia. pp.105-135.
- Onyx, J., Wood, C., Bullen, P. & Osburn, L. (2005) Social Capital: A rural youth perspective. *Youth Studies Australia*. 24 (4). 21-27. Dec.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD]. (1997) *Australian Country Note*. Prepared for the Thematic Review of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD]. (2001) *The Well-being of Nations: The role of human and social capital*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Ostrom, E. in Putzel, J. (1997) Accounting for the 'Dark Side' of Social Capital: Reading Robert Putnam on democracy. *Journal of International Development*. 9 (7). 939-949.
- Parker, P., Cooney, G., Bornholt, L., Harman, K., Ball, S. & Scott, C. (1993) *Going on to University*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

- Pascoe, N. (1996) *The Development of Knowledge and Attitudes about Career Options and Australia's Economic Future: Report of focus groups*. Canberra: Schools Council.
- Patterson, C. & Abbott-Chapman, J. (1992) *The Students at Risk Program: An evaluation of projects in Tasmanian schools. Report 2*. Hobart: Youth Education Studies Centre, University of Tasmania.
- Patton, M. (1990) *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Patton, M. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Payne, J. (1995) *Routes Beyond Compulsory Schooling*. ED Research Series Youth Cohort Report No. 31. Sheffield: Policy Studies Institute.
- Pigg, K.E. & Crank, L.D. (2004) Building Community Social Capital: The potential and promise of information and communications technologies. *The Journal of Community Informatics*. 1 (1). 58-73.
- Pinkerton, J. & Dolan, P. (2007) Family Support, Social Capital, Resilience and Adolescent Coping. *Child and Family Social Work*. 12. 219-228.
- Pope, J (2003) cited in Stokes, H., Stacey, K. & Lake, M. (2006) *Schools, Vocational Education and Training and Partnerships: Capacity-building in rural and regional communities*. Adelaide. National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd.
- Portes, A. (1998) Social Capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 24. 1-24.
- Postle, G. D., Clarke, J. R., Skuja, E., Bull, D. D., Batorowicz, K. & McCann, H. A. (1997) *Towards Excellence in Diversity: Educational equity in the Australian higher education sector in 1995. Trends and future directions*. Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Press.
- Productivity Commission. (2003) *Social Capital: Reviewing the concept and its policy implications*. Commission Research Paper. Melbourne: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Putnam, R. D. (1993) Social Capital and Institutional Success. Chapter 6 in Putnam, R.D. with Leonardi, R. & Nanetti, R.Y. *Making Democracy Work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. pp.163-185.
- Putnam, R.D. (1996) The Strange Disappearance of Civic America. *Policy*. 12 (1). 3-15. Autumn.
- Putzel, J. (1997) Accounting for the 'Dark Side' of Social Capital: Reading Robert Putnam on democracy. *Journal of International Development*. 9 (7). 939-949.
- Roussel, S. (2002) Factors Influencing Participation in Post-secondary Education and Training in Australia: 1989 to 1997. *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*. 5 (1). 77-100.

- Roussel, S. & Murphy, T. (2000) *Participation in Post-compulsory Schooling*. IAED Occasional Papers Series 3/2000 Research and Evaluation Branch, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs. Canberra. Commonwealth of Australia.
- Ruge, J. (2003) *Developing Home, School and Community Partnerships: A working paper*. Erskineville, New South Wales: New South Wales Department of Education and Training.
- Schaefer-McDaniel, N.J. (2004) Conceptualizing Social Capital among Young People: Towards a new theory. *Children, Youth and Environments*. 14 (1). 140-150.
- Schneider, B. & Stevenson, D. (1999) *The Ambitious Generation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Schuller, T. (2007) Reflections on the Use of Social Capital. *Review of Social Economy*. LXV (1). 11-28. March.
- Schuller, T., Baron, S. & Field, J. (2000) Social Capital: A review and critique. Chapter 1 in Baron, S., Field, J. & Schuller, T. (Eds.) *Social Capital: Critical perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp.1-38.
- Schwandt, T.A. (2000) Three Epistemological Stances for Qualitative Inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism. Chapter 7 in Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (2nd. Ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc. pp.189-213.
- Silverman, D. (2003) Analysing Talk and Text. Chapter 9 in Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc. pp.340-362.
- Smith, L. (2004) Changes in Student Motivation over the Final Year of High School. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*. 5 (2). 64-85.
- Smith, M.H., Beaulieu, L.J. & Israel, G.D. (1992) Effects of Human Capital and Social Capital on Dropping Out of High School in the South. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*. 8 (1). 75-87. Winter.
- Smith, M.H., Beaulieu, L.J. & Seraphine, A. (1995) Social Capital, Place of Residence and College Attendance. *Rural Sociology*. 60 (3). 363-380. Fall.
- Spierings, J. (2001 October) Regional and Local Government Initiatives to Supporting Youth Pathways: Lessons from innovative communities. *Proceedings from ACER Understanding Youth Pathways Conference*, Melbourne, Victoria, 15-16 October, 2001.
- Stake, R.E. (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Stevenson, S., Evans, C., Maclachlan, M., Karmel, T. & Blakers, R. (2001) *Access: Effect of campus proximity and socio-economic status on university participation rates in regions*. Occasional Paper Series 01/C Revised Edition.

Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training, Higher Education Division.

Stewart, A. (2004) *Post-school Outcomes for 'The Island' Students and their Views on Place and Identity: Year 10 and year 11 transition in a rurally remote area*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Hobart: University of Tasmania.

Stewart-Weeks, M. & Richardson, C. (Eds.) (1998) *Social Capital Stories*. St Leonards, N.S.W: The Centre for Independent Studies.

Stokes, H., Stacey, K. & Lake, M. (2006) *Schools, Vocational Education and Training and Partnerships: Capacity-building in rural and regional communities*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd.

Stokes, H. & Tyler, D. (2002) *Negotiating Pathways: The evaluation of phase 2 of the Pathways Project in Victoria*. East Melbourne: Department of Education and Training, Victoria.

Stokes, H. & Wyn, J. (2007) Constructing Identities and Making Careers: Young people's perspectives on work and learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*. 26 (5). 495-511.

Stone, W. (2001) *Measuring Social Capital: Towards a theoretically informed measurement framework for researching social capital in family and community life*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Sztompka, P. (1999) *Trust: A sociological theory*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press.

Teachman, J.D., Paasch, K. & Carver, K. (1997) Social Capital and the Generation of Human Capital. *Social Forces*. 75 (4). 1343-1359. June.

Teese, R. (2004) Early School Leavers and VET. Chapter 11 in Bowman, K. (Ed.) *Equity in Vocational Education and Training: Research readings*. Adelaide: Australian National Training Authority. pp.184-193.

Teese, R. (2005) For Which Young People Do Schools Work Well and Why? Chapter 9 in Richardson, S. & Prior, M. (Eds) *No Time to Lose: The well-being of Australia's children*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press. pp.240-254.

The Bush Tracks Research Collective. (2006) Bush Tracks: Exploring rural teaching transitions. *Education in Rural Australia*. 16 (2). 3-11.

Thompson, D.W. (2008) Widening Participation and Higher Education. Students, Systems and other Paradoxes. *London Review of Education*. 6 (2). 137-147. July.

Tinto, V. (1993) *Leaving College: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tuan, Y. (1977) *Space and Place: The perspective of experience*. London: Edward Arnold.

- Vanclay, F. (2008) Place Matters. Chapter 1 in Vanclay, F., Higgins, M. & Blackshaw, A (Eds.) *Making Sense of Place: Exploring concepts and expressions of place through different senses and lenses*. Canberra: National Museum of Australia Press. pp.3-21.
- Wasonga, T. Christman, D.E. & Kilmer, L. (2003) Ethnicity, Gender and Age: Predicting resilience and academic achievement among urban high school students. *American Secondary Education*. 32 (1). 62-74. Retrieved March 2, 2004 from <http://proquest.umi.com>
- Wentzel, K.R. (1996) Social Goals and Social Relationships as Motivators of School Adjustment. Chapter 10 in Juvonen, J. & Wentzel, K.R. (Eds.). *Social Motivation: Understanding children's school adjustment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.226-247.
- Western, J., McMillan, J. & Durrington, D. (1998) *Differential Access to Higher Education: The measurement of socioeconomic status, rurality and isolation*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- White, R. & Wyn, J. (2005) *Youth and Society: Exploring the social dynamics of youth experience*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Wieranga, A. (1999) Imagined Trajectories: Local culture and social identity. Chapter 20 in White, R. (Ed.) *Australian Youth Subcultures: On the margins and in the mainstream*. Hobart: Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies. pp.189-199.
- Wieranga, A. (2001) *Making a Life*. PhD thesis. Hobart: University of Tasmania.
- Williams, T., Long, M., Carpenter, P. & Hayden, M. (1993) *Entering Higher Education in the 1980s*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Williamson, J. & Marsh, A. (1999) *Educational Pathways: Or tracks that lead nowhere?* CRLRA Discussion Paper D2/1999). Launceston: Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, University of Tasmania.
- Winter, I. (2000) *Social Capital and Public Policy in Australia*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Withers, G. & Batten, M. (1988) *For National Consideration: Improving post-compulsory curriculum provision*. Canberra: Curriculum Development Centre.
- Witko, K., Bernes, K.B., Magnusson, K. and Bardick, A.D. (2005) Senior High School Career Planning: What students want. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*. 6 (1). 34-49.
- Wooden, M. (1999) *Review of Research: Impediments to the employment of young people*. Leabrook, South Australia: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Woolcock, M. (1998) Social Capital and Economic Development: Toward a theoretical synthesis and policy framework. *Theory and Society*. 27. 151-208.

- Woolcock, M. (2000) Why Should We Care About Social Capital? *Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration*. 98. 17-19. Dec.
- Wyn, J. (2007) Learning to 'Become Somebody Well': Challenges for educational policy. *The Australian Educational Researcher*. 34 (3). 35-52. Dec.
- Zubrick, S.R., Silburn, S.R. & Prior, M. (2005) Resources and Contexts for Child Development: Implications for children and society. Chapter 6 in Richardson, S. & Prior, M. (Eds.) *No Time to Lose: The wellbeing of Australia's children*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press. pp.161-200.

APPENDIX A: STUDENT PCET PARTICIPATION PROFILES

PCET participation profile <i>(Type of experience of initial years of PCET, as described in Chapter 5)</i>	Pseudonym	School and community	Senior Secondary college
Straightforward and successful	Lisa*	Chatfield	Campbell
Straightforward and successful	Nadine	Pieman	Argyle
Straightforward and successful	Narelle	Pieman	Argyle
Straightforward and successful	Craig	Gardiner	Davey
Straightforward and successful	Erica	Gardiner	Davey
Straightforward and successful	David*	Pieman	Campbell
Straightforward and successful	Jenny	Vincent	Davey
Straightforward and successful	Bronwen	Vincent	Bathurst
Problematic but successful	Andrew	Pieman	Argyle
Problematic but successful	Anna	Pieman	Argyle
Problematic but successful	Simon	Pieman	Argyle
Problematic but successful	Melanie*	Pieman	Argyle
Problematic but successful	Edward*	Vincent	Davey
Problematic but successful	Richard	Gardiner	Bathurst
Problematic but successful	Claire	Chatfield	Campbell
Problematic but successful	Helena	Pieman	Argyle
Problematic but successful	Scott	Pieman	Argyle
Problematic but successful	Taylor^	Point Hibbs	Davey
Limited experience	Amy#	Pieman	Argyle
Limited experience	Georgina#	Pieman	Argyle
Limited experience	Joanna#	Pieman	Argyle
Limited experience	Elizabeth	Pieman	Argyle
Limited experience	Marjorie	Gardiner	Davey
Limited experience	Sarah	Vincent	Bathurst

- * an original or a similar aspiration was realised.
- ^ a revised aspiration was realised.
- # a less substantial aspiration was realised.

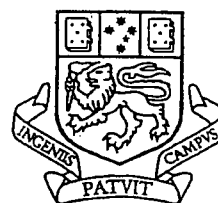
APPENDIX B: NOTIFICATION OF UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA ETHICS APPROVAL



Tasmania

DEPARTMENT of
HEALTH and
HUMAN SERVICES

*Human Research
Ethics Committee
(Tasmania)
Network*



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

**Southern Tasmania Social Sciences
Human Research Ethics Committee
APPLICATION APPROVAL**

To: Dr Sue Kilpatrick
School of Education
Box 66

From: Amanda McAully
Executive Officer

Date: 15th January 2003

Subject: **H7137 Family and community factors encouraging study
resilience among rural school leavers: an exploration of
social capital.**

The Southern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee on
13th January 2003 recommended approval of this project.

You are required to report immediately anything which might affect ethical
acceptance of the project, including:

- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants;
- proposed changes in the protocol;
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

You are also required to inform the Committee if the project is discontinued
before the expected date of completion, giving the reasons for discontinuation.

Please Note:

Approval is subject to annual review. You will be asked to submit your first report
on this project by **13th January 2004**.

Yours Sincerely


Amanda McAully

Contact: University of Tasmania
Research and Development Office
GPO Box 252-01
Hobart Tas 7001
Phone: 62 262763
Fax: 62267148
Email: Amanda.McAully@utas.edu.au

APPENDIX C: NOTIFICATION OF DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION, TASMANIA PERMISSION TO CONDUCT
RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS



Tasmania

DEPARTMENT *of* EDUCATION

20 February 2003

Hazel Baynes
Faculty of Education
University of Tasmania
Private Bag 66
HOBART TAS 7001

Dear Hazel

**RE: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY FACTORS ENCOURAGING STUDY RESILIENCE AMONG RURAL
SCHOOL LEAVERS: AN EXPLORATION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL**

I have been advised by the Departmental Consultative Research Committee that the above research study adheres to the guidelines established and that there is no objection to the study proceeding.

Please note that you have been given permission to proceed at a general level, and not at individual school level. You must still seek approval from the principals of the selected schools before you can proceed in those schools.

A copy of your final report should be forwarded to the Director, Office for Educational Review, Department of Education, GPO Box 169, Hobart 7001 at your earliest convenience within six months of the completion of the research phase in Department of Education schools.

Yours sincerely

Alison Jacob
DEPUTY SECRETARY
(EDUCATION STRATEGIES)

APPENDIX D: NOTIFICATION OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH INVOLVING TAFE STUDENTS

Hazel Baynes

From: Helen Bennett [Helen.Bennett@tafe.tas.edu.au]
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2003 4:01 PM
To: Hazel.Baynes@utas.edu.au
Cc: Tom Ellis
Subject: Research Involving TAFE Students

Dear Ms Baynes

Thank you for your recent letter regarding your research proposal to study factors that encourage rural students to continue their education or training past the compulsory years.

As previously discussed, the Institute is unable to identify students with the specific characteristics required for your research and is not in a position to pass on to individual students your request to participate in the research.

However, we would be happy to assist you by placing your flyers, along the lines of the draft provided, on student noticeboards at nominated campuses. Tom Ellis, A/g State Manager TAFE Services, will be able to assist you in this regard, He can be contacted on 6233 7443 or email Tom.Ellis@tafe.tas.edu.au

Yours sincerely

Helen Bennett

Helen Bennett
Manager Executive Services
Institute of TAFE Tasmania

Telephone 6233 4608
email Helen.Bennett@tafe.tas.edu.au

APPENDIX E: STUDENT INFORMATION LETTER



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

School of Education
Faculty of Education

(Date)

Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers: an exploration of social capital

Dear ex-District High or rural High School student,

I would like to invite your participation in a study of the factors that encourage rural students to continue with their education or training beyond Year 10. I am conducting the study as part of my Ph.D. research which is being supervised by Sue Kilpatrick and Dr. Joan Abbot-Chapman. The study has been approved by the University's Southern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee, the Tasmanian Education Department, TAFE Tasmania, and also has the support of District High and rural High Schools in the State.

All students who have previously attended one of eight selected District High or rural High Schools, who are currently enrolled either in Year 12 studies at a government college or in a TAFE course and intend to continue studying in 2004 are invited to participate in the study. The study is to find out from rural students themselves what it is exactly that has helped them to persist with studies after Year 10, often under trying circumstances. The way rural students make decisions about study and their future is of particular interest, as are the other people who assist them when they are making these important decisions.

You will be asked to participate in two face-to-face interviews - one in 2003 and a second in 2004, and will be asked questions about your aspirations and the influences on your choice of post-Year 10 study, about your experiences of study since leaving your District High or rural High School, and about the people who have encouraged you to continue with education or training. The interviews will take approximately 45 minutes.

The study will help schools and other people in the community to better understand the experiences of rural students when they continue their studies at a college at some distance from home. All information collected is confidential and anonymous. Reports and papers produced from the project will not identify any individual student or family in any way, neither will any community be identified in a negative way. Participation is entirely voluntary, and students can withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Contact persons

If you would like further information about this study, please contact Dr Sue Kilpatrick (Ph. 6324 3018) or Dr. Joan Abbott-Chapman (Ph. 6226 2580).

Concerns or complaints

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the manner in which the study is conducted, contact the Chair or Executive Officer of the University's Southern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (Chair: A/Professor Margaret Otlowski, Ph. 6226 7569 or EO: Ms Amanda McAully, Ph. 6226 2763).

A meeting for interested students to meet with the researcher and hear more about this study will be held on **(date, time, place)** and you are invited to attend.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Yours sincerely,
Hazel Baynes
Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

APPENDIX F: PARENT INFORMATION LETTER



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

School of Education
Faculty of Education

Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers: an exploration of social capital

(Date)

Dear Parent of ex-District High or rural High School student,

I would like to obtain your consent for your son's/daughter's participation in a study of the factors that encourage rural students to continue with their education or training beyond Year 10. The study is being conducted as part of my Ph.D. research and is being supervised by Dr. Sue Kilpatrick and Dr Joan Abbott-Chapman. The study has been approved by the University's Southern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee, the Tasmanian Education Department, TAFE Tasmania, and also has the support of District High and rural High Schools in the State.

Students who have previously attended one of eight selected District High or rural High Schools and are now enrolled either in Year 12 studies at a government college or in a TAFE course are invited to participate in the study. The study is to find out from rural students themselves what it is exactly that has helped them to persist with studies after Year 10, often under trying circumstances. The way rural students make decisions about study and their future is of particular interest, as are the other people who assist them when they are making these important decisions.

Students who participate in the interviews will be asked questions about their aspirations and the influences on their choice of post-Year 10 study, about their experiences of study since leaving their District High or rural High School, and about the people who have encouraged them to continue with education or training. The study will help schools and other people in the community to better understand the experiences of rural students when they continue their studies at a college at some distance from home. All information collected is confidential and anonymous. Reports and papers produced from the project will not identify any individual student or family in any way, nor will any community be identified in a negative way. Participation is entirely voluntary, and students can withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Contact persons

If you would like further information about this study, please contact Dr Sue Kilpatrick (Ph. 6324 3018) or Dr. Joan Abbott-Chapman (Ph. 6226 2580).

Concerns or complaints

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the manner in which the study is conducted, contact the Chair or Executive Officer of the University's Southern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (Chair: A/Professor Gino Dal Pont, Ph. 6226 2078 or EO: Ms Amanda McAully, Ph. 6226 2763).

Your son/daughter has expressed an interest in participating in the study. Because he/she is less than 18 years old I am required to gain your consent before he/she can take part. If you have read the above information and are happy to give your consent, please complete the consent form and your son/daughter will return it to me.

Yours sincerely,

Hazel Baynes
Faculty of Education,
University of Tasmania

APPENDIX G: 'ENCOURAGING OTHER' INFORMATION LETTER



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

School of Education
Faculty of Education

(Date)

Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers: an exploration of social capital

Dear

I would like to invite your participation in a study of the factors that encourage rural students to continue with their education or training beyond Year 10. The study is being conducted as part of my Ph.D. research and is being supervised by Dr. Sue Kilpatrick and Dr. Joan Abbott-Chapman. The study has been approved by the University's Southern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee, the Tasmanian Education Department, TAFE Tasmania, and also has the support of District High and rural High Schools in the State.

Students who have previously attended one of eight selected District High or rural High Schools and are now enrolled either in Year 12 studies at a government college or in a TAFE course have participated in an interview study that aimed to find out what it is exactly that has helped them to persist with studies after Year 10, often under trying circumstances. Students were asked to nominate people who had encouraged them to continue with education or training and your name was mentioned by [student's name]. The way rural students make decisions about study and their future is of particular interest, as are the other people who assist them when they are making these important decisions.

You will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. You will be asked questions about how you have influenced [student's name] choice of post-Year 10 study, how and why you encouraged **her/him** and about other students you may have encouraged to persist with education or training. The study will help schools and other people in the community to better understand the experiences of rural students when they continue their studies at a college at some distance from home. All information collected is confidential and anonymous. Reports and papers produced from the project will not identify any individual student or family in any way, neither will any community be identified in a negative way. Participation is entirely voluntary, and participants can withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Contact persons

If you would like further information about this study, please contact Dr Sue Kilpatrick (Ph. 6324 3018) or Dr. Joan Abbott-Chapman (Ph. 6226 2580).

Concerns or complaints

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the manner in which the study is conducted, contact the Chair or Executive Officer of the University's Southern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (Chair: A/Professor Gino Dal Pont, Ph. 6226 2078 or EO: Ms Amanda McAully, Ph. 6226 2763).

If you have any questions about this very worthwhile project please contact me (Ph 6226 2538 or email Hazel.Baynes@utas.edu.au).

I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

Hazel Baynes
Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania.

APPENDIX H: STUDENT FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION LETTER



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

School of Education
Faculty of Education

(Date)

Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers: an exploration of social capital

Dear

I would like to invite your participation in a tape recorded focus group to discuss the findings of my PhD research in which you have participated, in order to determine their accuracy from the student point of view. The focus group will be held in **(name of city)** during April 2005 at a venue that will be convenient to participants. The discussion will be about the study findings on students' aspirations and the influences on students' choice of post-Year 10 study, about students' experiences of study since leaving high school, and about the people who have encouraged students to continue with education or training. The focus group will take approximately an hour.

As you may remember, the study is being supervised by Dr. Sue Kilpatrick and has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network, the Tasmanian Education Department, TAFE Tasmania, and also has the support of District High and rural High Schools in the State.

The study will help schools, colleges, universities and other people in the community to better understand the experiences of rural students when they continue their education and training at a college, university, TAFE, or training organisation at some distance from home.

Confidentiality and anonymity

All information collected is confidential and anonymous. Reports and papers produced from the project will not identify any individual student or family in any way, neither will any community be identified in a negative way. The tape recording of the focus group will not include the names of participants and will be used only by the researcher. You will need to bear in mind that others in the focus group will hear what you say, and so to maximise confidentiality you must agree to not repeat what you hear others say in the focus group. All research data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and password-protected computer files in the Faculty of Education. Research data is required to be kept by the Faculty for 5 years, and after this time will be destroyed by shredding.

Voluntariness and withdrawal

Participation is entirely voluntary, and is evidenced by signing a consent form. In any case, however, you can withdraw at any time without prejudice. You may also withdraw any data collected to that point.

Contact persons

If you would like further information about this study, please contact Dr Sue Kilpatrick (Ph. 6324 4011).

Concerns or complaints

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network, Ms Amanda McAully, (Ph. 6226 2763).

If you would like to participate in this focus group, or have any further questions, please contact me (Ph. 6226 2538 or email Hazel.Baynes@utas.edu.au).

I look forward to meeting with you.

Yours sincerely,

Hazel Baynes (Investigator)
Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

APPENDIX I: 'ENCOURAGING OTHER' FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION LETTER



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

School of Education
Faculty of Education

(Date)

Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers: an exploration of social capital

Dear

I would like to invite your participation in a tape recorded focus group to discuss the findings of my PhD research in which you have participated, in order to determine the accuracy of the findings from the point of view of those who had encouraged the students. As you may remember, the study is being supervised by Dr. Sue Kilpatrick and has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network, the Tasmanian Education Department, TAFE Tasmania, and also has the support of District High and rural High Schools in the State. The study will help schools, colleges, universities and other people in the community to better understand the experiences of rural students when they continue their education/training at a college, university or training organisation at some distance from home.

The focus group will be held in the **(name of town)** area during May 2005 at a venue convenient to participants. The discussion will be about the study findings on students' aspirations, the influences on their choice of post-Year 10 study, their experiences of study since leaving high school, the people who have encouraged them to continue with education or training, and how and why students were encouraged to persist with education or training. The focus group will take approximately an hour. I am very interested in the comments of all participants in the study but realise that many people will be unable to attend the focus group so I have made alternative arrangements to include their responses. I have enclosed a summary of the study findings and hope as many people as possible will comment on each/any of the findings either immediately below or on the reverse side of the page and then post back to me (address is on the bottom right hand side of this letter).

Confidentiality and anonymity

All information collected is confidential and anonymous. Reports and papers produced from the project will not identify any individual student or family in any way, neither will any community be identified in a negative way. The tape recording of the focus group will not include the names of participants and will be used only by the researcher. You will need to bear in mind that others in the focus group will hear what you say. To maintain confidentiality, you should not repeat what you hear others say in the focus group. All research data will be kept in locked filing cabinets and password-protected computer files in the Faculty of Education. Research data is required to be kept by the Faculty for 5 years, and after this time will be destroyed by shredding.

Voluntariness and withdrawal

Participation is entirely voluntary, and is evidenced by signing a consent form. In any case, you can withdraw at any time without prejudice. You may also withdraw any data collected to that point.

Contact persons

If you would like further information about this study, please contact Dr Sue Kilpatrick (Ph. 6324 4011).

Concerns or complaints

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the manner in which the study is conducted, contact the Chair or Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network, Ms Amanda McAully, (Ph. 6226 2763).

If you would like to participate in this focus group, or have any further questions, please contact me (Ph 6226 2538 or email Hazel.Baynes@utas.edu.au). I look forward to meeting you again.

Yours sincerely,
Hazel Baynes (Investigator)
University of Tasmania, Faculty of Education

APPENDIX J: STUDENT INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Statement of informed consent - students

Title of Project: Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers.

I have read the information sheet/letter for this study.

The nature of the study has been explained to me.

I understand the study involves my participation in an interview program on two separate occasions, in 2003 and 2004.

I understand that there are no risks or possible discomfort.

I understand that all research data will be treated as confidential.

Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a subject.

I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Name of subject:.....

Age of subject:

Signature of subject:.....

Date:

I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and believe that the consent is informed and that she/he understands the implications of participation.

Name of Investigator:

Signature of Investigator:

Date:

APPENDIX K: PARENT OF STUDENT INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Statement of informed consent –parent of student

Title of Project: Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers.

I have read the information sheet/letter for this study.

The nature of the study has been explained to me.

I understand the study involves my son/daughter's participation in an interview program on two separate occasions, in 2003 and 2004.

I understand that there are no risks or possible discomfort.

I understand that all research data will be treated as confidential.

Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that my son/daughter cannot be identified as a subject.

I agree that my son/daughter may participate in this investigation and understand that he/she may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Name of subject:

Name of parent/guardian:
(if subject under 18 years of age).....

Signature of parent/guardian:.....

Date:

I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that she/he understands the implications of participation.

Name of Investigator:

Signature of Investigator:

Date:

APPENDIX L: ‘ENCOURAGING OTHER’ INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Statement of informed consent - “encouraging others’

Title of Project: Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers: an exploration of social capital

I have read the information sheet/letter for this study.
The nature of the study has been explained to me.
I understand the study involves my participation in an interview program.
I understand that there are no risks or possible discomfort.
I understand that all research data will be treated as confidential.
Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a subject.
I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Name of subject:.....

Signature of subject:.....

Date:.....

I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that she/he understands the implications of participation.

Name of Investigator:

Signature of Investigator:

Date:.....

APPENDIX M: STUDENT FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM



School of Education
Faculty of Education

Focus group statement of informed consent – students

Title of Project: Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers.

I have read the information sheet/letter for this study.
The nature of the study has been explained to me.
I understand the study involves my participation in a one hour tape-recorded focus group in May 2005.
I understand that there is a slight risk that what I say in the focus group might be repeated by others, despite their being required to agree not to do so.
I understand that there is no possible discomfort arising from participation.
I understand that all research data will be treated as confidential.
Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a subject.
I agree to keep confidential all discussion that has taken place in this focus group.
I agree to keep confidential the identity of all persons taking part in this focus group.
I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without prejudice, and I may withdraw any data contributed to that point.

Name of subject:.....

Signature of subject:.....

Date:.....

Statement of investigator:

I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that she/he understands the implications of participation.

Name of Investigator:.....

Signature of Investigator:.....

Date:.....

APPENDIX N: 'ENCOURAGING OTHER' FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

School of Education
Faculty of Education

Focus group statement of informed consent – encouraging others.

Title of Project: Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers.

I have read the information sheet/letter for this study.

The nature of the study has been explained to me.

I understand the study involves my participation in a one hour tape recorded focus group in May 2005.

I understand that there is a slight risk that what I say in the focus group might be repeated by others, despite their being required to agree not to do so.

I understand that there is no possible discomfort arising from participation.

I understand that all research data will be treated as confidential.

Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a subject.

I agree to keep confidential all discussion that has taken place in this focus group.

I agree to keep confidential the identity of all persons taking part in this focus group.

I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without prejudice, and I may withdraw any data contributed to that point.

Name of subject:.....

Signature of subject:.....

Date:.....

Statement by investigator:

I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that she/he understands the implications of participation.

Name of Investigator:.....

Signature of Investigator:.....

Date:.....

**Preliminary Interview Survey of Year 12 students for Ph.D. study:
“Family and Community factors encouraging study persistence among rural
school leavers: an exploration of social capital”**

Please write your response or circle the appropriate response where provided.

- Thank you for your interest and time.**

APPENDIX P: LIST OF ISSUES, PHASE 1 INTERVIEW

Interview Schedule/List of issues - Phase 1, Year 12 students & TAFE students

“Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers: an exploration of social capital.”

Thank you for meeting with me today and taking part in my PhD research. As I've mentioned before in the information letter and at the meeting in April (or subsequent relevant date), I'm talking to rural students about what has encouraged them to continue with some form of post-Year 10 education or training. I'm interested in all forms, so I'm interested in talking to students planning uni. or VET courses or traineeships. I'd like to ask you about your study experiences since Year 10, how you've made your plans, and the people who've been involved with, or influenced your decisions. There's lots of research about other people's views, for instance, people in the Education departments, Principals and teachers but I'm interested in rural students' and rural families' views. I'd like to hear from students like you, what it's like to be going from a rural high school to college in town, and then on to one of the many form of education/training after that. So there are no right answers to the questions, I'd just like your own thoughts and views. The questions are only a starting point/guide because I'm not a school student and I'm not living in rural Tasmania so there may be issues I'm not aware of. If your experiences mean the interview goes in another direction that's ok. At the end there's an opportunity for you to raise anything that you think is relevant and we haven't talked about. Do you have any questions before we start?

1. Please will you tell me about yourself, where you were born, places you've lived, your education so far.

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Place of birth
4. Where you lived during childhood (moving house?)
5. Where were you at
 - a) primary school
 - b) secondary school
6. What subjects did you study in Year 10?
7. What were your results?
8. What subjects did you study in Year 11/12?
9. What were your results?
10. What courses are you enrolled in this year?
11. Name of institution?
12. Do you have a paid job?
13. How important is it to you to do well in your studies?
14. Do you have a close attachment to home, family and your local community? (incl. membership of community groups as a younger child e.g. playgroup)
- 15a. Do you feel a need to move away from the local area?
- 15b. Why is this?

2. Please tell me about your family.

16. Mother's birthplace
17. Father's birthplace
18. Where your mother lived during her childhood?
19. Where your father lived during his childhood?
20. Mother's highest level of education **completed**
 - a) Yr 10,
 - b) Yr 11,
 - c) Yr 12,
 - e) TAFE certificate/diploma,
 - f) Uni degree/diploma,
 - g) other post secondary incl. on-the-job training,
 - h) other (specify.....)
 - i) don't know.

21. Father's highest level of education **completed**
 - a) Yr 10,
 - b) Yr 11,
 - c) Yr 12,
 - e) TAFE certificate/diploma,
 - f) Uni degree/diploma,
 - g) other post secondary incl. on-the-job training,
 - h) other (specify.....)
 - i) don't know.
 22. Mother's occupation
 23. Father's occupation
 24. Number of siblings and their gender/age.
 25. Your place in the family.
 26. Highest level of education completed - older siblings
 - a) Yr 10,
 - b) Yr 11,
 - c) Yr 12,
 - e) TAFE certificate/diploma,
 - f) Uni degree/diploma,
 - g) other post secondary incl. on-the-job training,
 - h) other (please specify.....)
 - i) don't know.
 27. What about other family members, do you have close links with any of them?
 28. Is your family interested in learning generally? (*books, newspapers, magazines in the home, use of library/online access centre, enrolled in Uni/TAFE/Ad.Ed. course etc.*)
 29. What does your father think about
 - a) you continuing your education/training, whatever form that might take,
 - b) the college you attend,
 - c) you having a university education/doing a TAFE course?
 30. What does your mother think about
 - a) you continuing your education/training,
 - b) the college you attend,
 - c) you having a university education/doing a TAFE course?
 31. What do your siblings think about
 - a) you continuing your education/training,
 - b) the college you attend,
 - c) you having a university education/doing a TAFE course?
 32. What do your other family members (grandparents, aunts etc.) think about
 - a) you continuing your education/training,
 - b) the college you attend,
 - c) you having a university education/doing a TAFE course?
 33. Does your family have close ties with the local community? (*e.g. membership of groups/other children's attendance at playgroup or other groups in community/known parents of your friends/parent-school connectivity*)
 34. How is your family finding local economic conditions?
- 3. Please tell me about your education/training aspirations**
35. When considering your career, how important is it for you to have
 - a) a job/career that is interesting
 - b) a job/career that uses your abilities and talents
 - c) a job/career that pays well
 - d) a secure job/career
 - e) a job/career in a place near your family
 - f) a job/career in a place near your friends
 - g) a job/career that enables you to travel
 - h) any others?
 36. How did you go about making plans for your future career or study? (*incl. extent of discussion with others*)
 37. Have you changed your plans at all? (*incl. reasons for*)
 38. How confident are you that you will succeed with your plans? (*incl. reasons*)

39. Who influenced your choice of what to do after Year 10?
 a) Mother, b) Father, c) Sibling (specify.....),
 d) Other relative/family member (please specify.....),
 e) Friend of family, f) Friend outside school, g) Class/schoolmate
 h) Class teacher, i) School careers adviser, j) Principal,
 k) Senior staff at school, l) Other teacher at school,
 m) Other (specify.....)
40. How did they influence you?
41. To what extent have you been influenced by what your parents or siblings have done, or are doing? (confirm whether or not parents/siblings continued their education or training, incl. completion)
42. Were the opinions of anyone else important?
43. Have you been influenced by what any other person/people have done or are doing? (If yes, how did they influence?)
44. To what extent do you think your own initiative and motivation has formed your plans?
45. What are your plans after finishing Year 12? a) Year 13
 b) TAFE course (details)
 c) Uni (details).
 d) Employment (details)
 e) Other (details)
46. Do you, or do you not think that continuing your education and/or training to Year 12 and beyond, whether its VET, a uni. course or traineeship, is valuable?
 (Why is this?)
47. What is your main reason for going to senior secondary college
 a) to follow a vocational interest (not including the salary level)
 b) intellectual/subject interest
 c) broader educational/cultural
 d) economic - (to get a better paying job)
 e) other (please specify.....)
48. Are you satisfied with your current post-school pathway?
49. After completing your education/training, how easy do you think it will be to find employment?
50. What sort of job do you think you will be getting?
51. Where do you think this job will be?
52. How likely is it that you will return to study after being in the workforce?
53. What do you think about the future of Tasmania, and of Australia?
 a) Tas.
 b) Aus

4. Please tell me about the career advice and information you were given.

54. Did you think that the advice given by the school (teachers, career advisers etc.) was appropriate, useful etc?
55. To what extent have you relied on the advice of each of these people?
56. Were you under any particular pressure? (e.g. to do anything in particular; to continue with academically-oriented study)
57. Do you think your high school had prepared you adequately/appropriately for senior secondary study?
 study techniques/skills,
 essay-writing skills,
 workload,
 examinations,
58. Do you think your school gave you enough guidance, advice when you were making your subject choices for Year 11/12?
59. Do you think the college provided appropriate/sufficient information about all aspects of college life:-
 Student Services,
 subjects offered,
 timetable,
 hostels/accommodation,
 financial assistance available,
 living/getting about in the city (e.g location of useful places such as Centrelink, building your support network,
 becoming independent etc.?

5. Please tell me about how your study is financed?

60. Have you been awarded any prizes, scholarships, bursaries

a) at school (details)

b) at college (details)

61. What is your main source of financial support?

a) parent(s)

b) AUSTUDY/ABSTUDY

c) scholarship

d) bursary

e) income from own paid job

f) other (please specify.....)

6. Please tell me about your friends and activities in the local community.

62. Do you belong to any clubs, societies or groups in your community?

a) social(name of)

b) cultural (name of)

c) sporting (name of)

d) music (name of)

e) drama (name of)

f) political (name of)

g) other (name of)

h) none

63. Have you made friends with any adults through membership of any of the groups?

64. Do you have any other friends outside your family? (*neighbours, family friends*)

65. If "Yes to either of the last 2 questions, have you sought advice about, or discussed your education and training aspirations with any of these adult friends? (*details*)

66. Of your close friends, how many are studying at the same level as you?

all, the majority, about half, a minority, none, other(specify)

67. How many close friends do you have?

68. Of your close friends, how many are planning next year to

a) go into the workforce,

b) go to TAFE,

c) go to uni.,

d) take a year off,

e) other (specify).

69. What do people in the local community think of the local high school? Are these views widely held or not/what are the differences? (*values and trust*)

70. What do people in the local community think of the college you are attending? Are these views widely held or not/what are the differences? (*values and trust*)

71. What do people in the local community think about rural students continuing their education past Year 10? (remembering that I'm talking about all forms of post-Year 10 education or training, so uni and TAFE courses, traineeships and on-the-job training)

Are these views widely held or not/what are the differences? (*values and trust*)

7. Support for study

72. To what extent do you rely on family for:

financial support?

psychological/emotional support?

73. What does your family know about funding sources/financial assistance available for rural senior secondary students? (*Networks*)

74. What does your family know about curriculum options in Years 11 and 12

for rural senior secondary students?

75. What does your family know about organisations outside school that can be useful (*e.g. Isolated Parents Association, hostel staff, others?*)

76. Does your family know many parents of local students who have already made the transition to senior secondary schooling away from home?

77. If "Yes," have they found them to be useful sources of information and advice about transition to senior secondary schooling away from home?

78. Do you think an absence of clear goals for post-compulsory education/training affects students' experiences after leaving Year 10?

79. Do you think the need to work part time to help finance studies affects students' experiences after leaving Year 10?

80. Do you think families are important in encouraging rural students to continue with all forms of education/training beyond Year 10? Please explain your answer.
81. Do you think people in the local community are important in encouraging rural students to continue with all forms of education/training beyond Year 10? Please explain your answer.
82. Is there more that families can do to encourage rural students to continue with all forms of education/training beyond Year 10? Please explain your answer.
83. Is there more that people in the local community can do to encourage rural students to continue with all forms of education/training beyond Year 10? Please explain your answer.
84. Is there more that schools can do to encourage rural students to continue with all forms of education/training beyond Year 10? Please explain your answer.
85. Have you any other suggestions for ways that rural students could be further encouraged to persist with their education/training beyond Year 10?
86. Is there anything further that you would like to say, anything that we haven't talked about that you think is relevant?

I mentioned originally that I would like to interview students again next year to follow up on what has happened to everyone, see how their education/training plans are going. Are you still happy to be interviewed next year?

If 'Yes' contact for 2004:

You mentioned in those preliminary questions (and in this interview) that you had been encouraged by other people. Do you think any of those people would be interested in being interviewed for the research?

If 'Yes'

How to recruit?

*my email/ph. given for student to contact me, or
my email/ph. given for EO to contact me, or
I will contact student in a week to check.*

APPENDIX Q: LIST OF ISSUES, PHASE 2 INTERVIEW

Interview Schedule/List of issues - Phase 2, 'Encouraging others'

"Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers: an exploration of social capital."

Note nature of relationship/connection between respondent and student (e.g. mother, father, older sibling, other family member, teacher, careers adviser, Principal, adult friend, employer, potential employer etc.

Thank you for meeting with me today and taking part in my PhD research. As I've mentioned before in the information letter and when I was talking to you on the telephone, I'm talking to the people who have encouraged a group of rural students to continue with some form of post-Year 10 education or training. I'd like to ask you about how you encouraged (*student's name*). There's lots of research about other people's views, for instance, people in the Education departments, Principals and teachers but I'm interested in the views of rural students' and rural families. I'd like to hear from people like you, what it's like for students (and their families) going from a rural high school to college in town and then some other form of education/training after that. So there are no right answers to the questions, I'd just like your own thoughts and views. The questions are only a starting point/guide because I'm not a school student and I'm not living in rural Tasmania so there may be issues I'm not aware of. If (*student's name's*) experiences mean the interview goes in another direction that's ok. At the end there's an opportunity for you to raise anything that you think is relevant and we haven't talked about. Do you have any questions before we start?

1. How did you encourage/are you encouraging (*student's name*) to continue with education/training after completing Year 10? Please include your reasons.
2. To what extent is/was your encouragement based on your own experience of study or work, or the experience of another? (*e.g. an older sibling if asking a parent, another student if asking a teacher/careers adviser*).
3. Is/was your own experience of study and/or work positive or negative? (*Determine level of education achieved*)
- 4a. Have you encouraged other rural students to continue with education/training?
- 4b. If "Yes" how many?
5. What factors do you think rural students take into account when making plans for post-compulsory education/training away from home?
- 6a. Do you believe rural students limit their post-compulsory aspirations?
- 6b. Please explain your answer.
7. Do you think an absence of clear goals for post-compulsory education/training affects students' experiences after leaving Year 10? (*Personalise, e.g refer to student(s) whether he/she/they have/haven't got clear goal*)
8. Do you think the need to work part time to help finance studies affects students' experiences after leaving Year 10? (*Personalise as above*)
9. What do you think of the college attended by (*student's name*)?
- 10a. Do you think that rural students' continuing education and/or training to Year 12 and beyond is valuable?
- 10b. Why is this?
11. How important are families in encouraging rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10? Please explain your answer.
12. Is there more that families can do to encourage rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10? Please explain your answer.
13. How important are friends in encouraging rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10? Please explain your answer.
14. Is there more that friends can do to encourage rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10? Please explain your answer.
- 15a. Do you know what the people in (*student's name*)'s local community think about their local high school?
- 15b. Do you know what the people in [*student's name*]'s local community think about the college he/she attends?

- 15c Do you know what the people in [student's name]'s local community think about rural students continuing with education/training to Year 12 and beyond?
*(Value placed on education and training, e.g. local jobs available for those who are skilled/educated so local community encourages students to continue or local jobs mainly unskilled but available so don't encourage students to continue or ...
 Emphasis on immediate future rather than the long term, etc. etc.)*
16. How important are people in the local community are important in encouraging rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10? Please explain your answer.
17. Is there more that people in communities can do to encourage rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10? Please explain your answer.
18. Is there more that schools can do to encourage rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10?
19. Is there more that colleges can do to encourage rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10?
20. Have you any other suggestions for ways that rural students could be further encouraged to persist with their education/training beyond Year 10?
21. Do you know anyone else who is/has been important in encouraging rural students to continue with their education/training or in influencing their post-Year 10 choices? *(Decide how to contact.)*
22. Is there anything further that you would like to add? Anything that you think is important/relevant that we haven't talked about?

Community Issues to pursue with those interviewed in the rural areas.

What issues are important for the local council?

What level of interest is there, in the local community, for providing/improving education facilities such as schools, sports facilities, community centres (e.g. online access centres?) or creating programs for use by youth, or providing activities that involve students and/or young people in community development projects?

What opportunities are provided through community-based groups for students and/or young people to get community influence on the development of their values and aspirations, especially from highly-educated adults?

What opportunities do community groups provide for students/young people to be exposed to positive role models who illustrate the importance of educational achievement?

To what extent are students/young people in the area:

in contact with a 'caring community'?

living in a place where there is a support system for local youths?

living in a place where adults seek to maximise young people's development?

Overall do supportive relationships exist in students'/young people's families and in their local community, that enhance their school achievements?

APPENDIX R: LIST OF ISSUES, PHASE 3 INTERVIEW

Student Interview - Phase 3, first year University students/equivalent year TAFE students/others

“Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers: an exploration of social capital”

Thank you for your participation in this second interview. As you'll remember from last time I'm interested in the views of rural students who've been to a rural high school, attended an urban college and have just started some form of further education/training. Some of the questions are following up on what you've been doing since last year, others are filling out more detail on what you told me before. For some people there are a few things to clarify from last year as well. Like last year the questions are a guide and we don't have to follow them if they don't seem appropriate, we can go in the direction that fits with your experiences. Also there's a chance at the end for you to raise anything that you think is relevant and we haven't talked about. Do you have any questions before we start?

1. Please will you tell me about yourself and your education since we last spoke

I have a list of the subjects you studied in Year 12 (*insert the relevant list of subjects*)
Can you give me a general idea of your results (I don't need to know subject by subject)?
Did you have a good/accurate idea of your likely results?
What course are you enrolled in this year? (*details of institution, duration etc.*)
Do you have a paid job?

2. Family and community support of your education and training plans

Remembering back to the times when you were thinking about post-Year 10 plans, can you tell me whether or not (*insert appropriate person*) was available/useful when you wanted to/needed to talk about these plans? (*explanation/detail*)
How often would you talk to (*insert appropriate person*) about your plans? (*Ask for explanation/detail*)
Was (*insert appropriate person*) involved in discussion with you about:
which college to attend,
subject choice,
(*Ask for explanation/detail*)
Remembering back to the times when you were thinking about post-Year 10 plans, aspirations etc. can you tell me whether or not (*insert appropriate person*) was available/useful when you had an issue/problem to deal with? (*Ask for explanation/detail*)
Remembering a bit further back, during high school years, maybe earlier, how important was school work/homework – to you and to (*insert appropriate person*)?
(*If participant has older sibs*) Did you have any talk/discussions with your older siblings?
Computer at home?
Did any of you have tutoring or any sort of outside school lessons of any kind?
What about discussions/consultation/talk with extended family?
Were you aware of (*insert appropriate person*) having particular expectations of you, for after Year 10? (*Ask for explanation/detail e.g. whether/how they were transmitted*)
(*If older siblings*) Can you tell me about your older siblings' experiences at college and beyond? (*trust of school/coll./Uni./TAFE/people in l.c./beyond*)
Did any of the experiences of your older siblings have any influence on your decision about what to do?(*e.g. older sib. going to college making it easier/paving the way.*)
Did your older sibling(s') experiences affect what (*appropriate person*) thought and the advice he/she gave you?
Could I confirm from last year that your family was important in encouraging?
Did family expect you to continue?
Were your friends achievers too?
Did they continue to college?
In the first interviews, not in response to a question, but as a comment, a lot of students gave their opinions as to whether they thought rural students were or were not disadvantaged in getting post-compulsory education. What is your view?

3. Please tell me about your current education/training aspirations

Have you changed your plans since we last spoke? (*Detail*)

What will you be doing in 2005?

Are you still confident that you will succeed with your plans? Why is that?

Are you satisfied with your post-Year 12 pathway?

Have you been further encouraged/influenced by anyone else in your choice of what to do since the end of Year 12?

Since we last spoke have you been influenced by what anyone else had done/is doing?

How did that influence you?

How important was encouragement from your family and/or local community compared with your own motivation/your following a childhood dream, ambition/going on with friends/escaping rural area/other?

4. Career advice and information

I got the impression from last interview that the school is very encouraging (or encouraging) of students to continue on with some education or training beyond Year 10, is this correct?

Is it all students?

Can you tell me about your own particular experience of getting career advice and information?

How would you describe the relationship/links between the school and the college?

What did you think about the college information that was provided to students who were coming along to Year 11?

Was there any confusion about choosing from the large range of subjects offered?

Any difficulty choosing an *appropriate combination* of subjects?

Do you think your college prepared you adequately/appropriately for the study you're doing?

study techniques/skills,

essay-writing skills,

workload,

examinations, etc.?

Do you think your college gave you enough guidance, advice when you were making your choice of course for this year?

Do you think the college provided appropriate/sufficient information about all aspects of UniversityTAFE life?

Student Services,

subjects offered,

timetable,

resid. colleges/accommodation,

financial assistance available,

living/getting about in the city (e.g location of useful places such as Centrelink, building your support network,

becoming independent etc.?

5. Please tell me about how your study is financed?

Have you been awarded any prizes, scholarships, bursaries?

What is your main source of financial support?

a) *parent(s)*

b) *AUSTUDY/ABSTUDY*

c) *scholarship*

d) *bursary*

e) *income from own paid job*

f) *other (specify.....)*

6. Please tell me about your friends and activities in the uni.?TAFE/work community.

Do you belong to any clubs, societies or groups in your community?

a) *social (name of)*

b) *cultural (name of)*

c) *sporting (name of)*

d) *music (name of)*

e) *drama (name of)*

f) *political (name of)*

g) *other (name of)*

h) *none*

Do you have any other adult friends since last year? (new neighbours, new Uni./TAFE/work friends etc.)

Have you sought advice about, or discussed your education and training aspirations with any of these friends?

How many close friends (own age) do you have?

Are these the same as last year?

Of your current close friends, how many are studying/training/working/apprenticed as you are?

How is the University/TAFE regarded by people in your home community?

7. Support for study

To what extent do you rely on family for financial support?

psychological/emotional support?

What does your family know about funding sources/financial assistance available for rural tertiary students?

What does your family know about University and TAFE courses?

What does your family know about organisations outside *University/TAFE* that can be useful (e.g. Isolated Parents Association, hostel/resid. college staff, others)?

Does your family know many parents of local students who have already made the transition to tertiary study?

If "Yes," have they found them to be useful sources of information and advice about transition to tertiary study?

Do you think an absence of clear goals for post-compulsory education/training affects students' experiences after leaving Year 12?

Do you think the need to work part time to help finance studies affects students' experiences after leaving Year 12?

Do you think families are important in encouraging rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 12? Please explain your answer.

Do you think people in the local community are important in encouraging rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 12? Please explain your answer.)

Is there more that families can do to encourage rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 12? Please explain your answer.

Is there anything more that people in the local community can do to encourage rural students in general to go on after Year 12?

Is there more that schools can do to encourage rural students to continue with their education/training beyond Year 12?

Is there more that colleges can do to encourage rural students to continue with their education/training beyond Year 12?

Have you any other suggestions for ways that rural students could be further encouraged to persist with their education/training beyond Year 12?

8. Your networks – including use of them

Which people, if any, in the local community did you talk to about your education plans?

(If necessary, ask about particular people mentioned in Phase 1 interview or by EOs).

Were your discussions with these people helpful?

How did they help? *(e.g. did they help you clarify plans, set goals).*

Did you prefer talking to anyone in particular, or any group of people?

Are your friends the sons/daughters of your parent's friends?

What were your reasons for seeking information, advice, opinions about your post-Year 10 plans from others?

Did you know students from previous years at school when you got to college?

Did you find that they were helpful when you were settling in at college?

How was it helpful?

9. Community issues

Can you tell me about the level of the local council's interest in young people in the *(community name)* area?

What opportunities are provided through community groups for young people in *(community name)* to get community influence on the development of their values and educational aspirations, to be encouraged to continue with education/training, to see positive role models, people who have continued on?

Did you see (*community name*) as
 a caring community?
 a place where there is a support system for local youth?
 a place where adults generally seek to maximise young people's development?
 Do local people encourage/support young people's school achievement?
 How?
 How would you describe the relationships of people in the local community?
 Are people interested in doing things for each other, generally, broadly?
 Are people in the school/the local community helpful to students? (Example given about a student seeking career info.)
 Are there networks through local services for students to find information etc.?
 Are there individuals in the local community who "know things" "know where to find out about things"?
 Did you feel you needed or could benefit from the assistance of anyone in the local community?
 Please explain your answer. (*Look for trust of lack of.*)

10. Your experience since Grade 10 in retrospect

Was there any "downside" to Year 11/12 for you?
 What sort of strategies did you use to keep on track/stick with it?
 Was there anything else you would have liked in the way of support/encouragement in retrospect?
 What do you think about students travelling daily to college?
 What do you think about students having/choosing to move away from home for Year 11/12 studies?
 Does the desire of rural students either to stay in the local area or to leave the local area affect their choice of what to do after Year 12?
 Is there anything further that you would like to add, anything that's important that we haven't talked about?

Thank you very much for setting aside the time to do this interview.
 I hope your plans continue to go well and that you enjoy (*insert as appropriate for each individual*)

Issues to raise in Phase 3 investigation or follow up from Phase 1:
Added for each individual student

Questions for Phase 3 – after reading literature
Added as relevant to each student

e.g. whether other adults reinforced parent's valuing/not valuing of education and/or encouragement to continue.

e.g. parent's network of friends and social interaction - local, regional, territory-free (interactions at local level, in-between and interactions at societal level.

Anything from EO interview transcript(s)?
Add as relevant for each student

APPENDIX S: SUMMARY OF STUDY FINDINGS - STUDENTS

Summary of findings from PhD study, "Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers: an exploration of social capital." (Students)

1. Students had varying experiences of the initial years of post-compulsory education and training:
 - a) a fairly straightforward and successful experience;
 - b) an experience of some problems which were overcome
 - c) an experience that was limited or less successful.
2. Students with a fairly straightforward and successful experience were
 - a) looking forward to participating in post-compulsory education and training,
 - b) were either clear about their post-compulsory education and training goal or confident of having a clear goal by the end of Year 12,
 - c) had proceeded straight through from Year 10 to Year 12 or had taken in their stride the need to do a Year 13 and were expecting to continue on to university or TAFE in 2004 ,
 - d) had close attachments to family, peers, teachers, others in the community who valued PCET highly
 - e) shared their valuing of PCET with family, peers, school , community;
 - f) trusted those in their networks to provide knowledge, information, advice, opinion, encouragement and support for their PCET aspirations and participation
 - g) mostly had consulted widely with a network of people from these groups and in some cases with people from outside the community, or were self-motivated and self-reliant with regard to their post-compulsory education and training aspirations and had not consulted widely, preferring to research their own career options;
 - h) had access to all the resources they needed to successfully participate in PCET

Students whose experience included facing some problems were

- a) looking forward to PCET participation, though a few had some concerns they had discussed with someone and a few felt less well-prepared for PCET;
- b) were clear about their goal or confident of having a clear goal by the end of Year 12; a change in aspirations led to issues/problems for some;
- c) had proceeded straight through from Year 10 to Year 12 or had accepted the need to do a Year 13 and were expecting to continue on to university or TAFE in 2004;
- d) had close attachments to family, peers, teachers, others in the community who valued PCET highly, or who enabled them to develop and realise independently developed PCET aspirations, or were not discouraging of their PCET aspirations?
- e) shared their valuing of PCET with someone in their family, school or community or were able to resolve conflicting norms and values
- f) trusted most of those in their networks to provide knowledge, information, advice, opinion, encouragement and support for their PCET aspirations
- g) some had consulted widely, some were self-motivated and self-reliant with regard to their post-compulsory education and training aspirations and had not consulted widely, preferring to research their own career options;
- h) had overcome the issues or problems they faced with the assistance or support of others or with intervention of others.
- i) had access eventually to all the resources they needed to successfully participate in PCET

Students who had a limited or less successful experience had

- a) some concerns regarding PCET participation or some awareness of family concerns about PCET participation;
- b) less firmly developed PCET aspirations;
- c) changes to their aspirations due to disappointing or not as expected Year 12 results, unrealistic aspirations, uncertain aspirations or competing aspirations
- e) some lack of commitment to PCET aspirations
- f) perceived they had received some encouragement from others;
- g) had networks containing people with different valuing of PCET;

- h) had close relationships with people who did not value PCET, especially post-Year 12 above other activities such as employment;
 - i) trusted the knowledge/information, advice, opinion and encouragement that these people provided;
 - j) had used the knowledge/information, advice, opinion and encouragement these people provided that was less supportive of their PCET aspirations and more supportive of other aspirations/activities;
 - k) had experienced a degree of struggle in attempting to achieve their aspirations.
3. At the time of the Phase 3 interviews, most students had either progressed to a post-Year 12 education/training course as planned. A few students were enrolled in Year 13 but still committed to a further education/training aspiration or had had a major change to their plans and were not in education/training.
 4. Further encouragement to continue with education/training received from other people since the Phase 1 interview included
 - a) continuing general encouragement and support from immediate and/or extended family.
 - b) some form of financial assistance from parent(s);
 - c) discussions with or study assistance from friends studying the same course/studying at the same institution.
 - d) career guidance and advice from college careers advisers and teachers and University of Tasmania course information officers.
 - e) discussions with older siblings about their own post-Year 12 experiences and about possible course choices.
 - f) non-family people confirming that the student's choice had been the right one.
 - g) other people at work, the employer and/or Jobs Pathways personnel being positive.
 - h) people in the community/community groups either acting as positive role models.
 5. Further encouragement to continue was also received from student's own success or experiences since their Phase 1 interview, through
 - a) enjoyment of/doing well in course or job;
 - b) academic success (TCE score, exam results, audition success, or getting a scholarship for uni.);
 - c) getting the chance for Year 13;
 - d) progress toward aspiration.
 6. Students' own experiences since the Phase 1 interview were a discouragement to continuing with education/training, through
 - a) not feeling ready for move away from home;
 - b) wanting to avoid HECS fees/debt;
 - c) losing interest in full time study, becoming more interested in job or another non-education/training option;
 - d) friends not continuing as planned;
 - e) being tempted by offer of work;
 - f) uncertainty about choice;
 - g) change in family circumstances;
 - h) Year 12 results not as good as expected/hoped.
 7. Other people and their experiences were a discouragement to continuing with education/training, through student
 - a) seeing other Year 12 leavers/friends getting employment;
 - b) seeing friends not enjoying uni./finding it hard, or hearing of slightly older people/friends' experience of changing course after a year at uni;
 - c) part time work friends questioning going to uni;
 - d) seeing parents changing their views, now being more amenable to job/work as an option;
 - f) hearing about slightly older people/friend's success in the workplace or climbing a career ladder without a uni. degree;
 - g) talking to people who were in the career of interest led to a change of mind;
 - h) getting information about a non-education/training option or opportunity, interest in following that up.

APPENDIX T: SUMMARY OF STUDY FINDINGS – ‘ENCOURAGING OTHERS’

Summary of findings from PhD study, “Family and community factors encouraging study persistence among rural school leavers; an exploration of social capital.”

(Encouraging Others)

- 1a. Continuing with education/training to Year 12 and beyond was valued by those encouraging the sample of students for the following reasons:
 - i) To learn more, to increase knowledge/skills, to allow student to make a contribution in the future
 - ii) To obtain qualifications for further education/training entry, for a particular job/career, for a “better, etc.” job/career, for a choice of job/career, to maximise a student’s potential (including getting qualifications to maximise)
 - iii) Because any “decent, etc.” job requires it/it avoids a dead-end job, being on the dole or similar experience to someone who didn’t continue.
 - iv) To follow a student’s interests, achieve student’s ambition/goal, to give useful contacts.
 - v) For personal development, broadening perspective, etc.
 - vi) For a better life (broader than job/career) options, including better than I had, a family member had or another person known had.
 - vii) Continuing is for all students (unqualified), belief in getting best education you can, that education is an essential part of life, is necessary/critical.
- 1b. Not continuing is also valuable for some – e.g. getting a job, studying 11/12 locally and a non-linear path.
- 2a. “Encouraging Others” perceptions of the community support available for young people in each of the five communities confirmed the premise the study was based on – that overall the five communities were supportive of young people continuing with education/training and generally.
- 2b. Support for students to continue with post-compulsory education/training came from families, family friends, peers, peers’ parents, schools, local training providers, the local Council, the police, a local newspaper, community groups, the business community, local traders, local employers, local industries (including agricultural) and local community members generally. The mix depended on the student and the particular area.
- 2c. Support was shown by encouraging a particular student/group of students, by supporting a range of school programmes, by providing resources/facilities for student(s) use, by recognising student achievement (attendance at school end of year awards, verbally, letters sent home, awarding certificates, medallions, prizes), by providing financial assistance (bursaries, scholarships, funding for student travel to outside events), by discouraging absenteeism and by publicising student/school activities and achievements. Support was also given in the form of providing work experience places for Year 9/10 and disaffected students, by offering part time work for students whilst they were studying, and by encouraging students on work experience and student employees to continue with education/training. Local offerings of some forms of post-compulsory education and training provided options and encouraged some students who otherwise would not have continued. Encouragement for continuing came from discussions students had with slightly older peers about their education/training experiences. Encouragement for continuing also came from students being influenced by post-compulsory-educated adults and being exposed to positive role models in their communities who illustrated the importance of educational achievement.
- 2d. Support for young people generally was less marked than support for students’ school achievement. In each area there was no consensus, but a range of opinions existed as to whether

the level of provision for young people in terms of facilities and programmes was adequate. Some opportunities were provided in all five areas, through community groups and the community generally, for young people to be influenced by adults other than family members. Half to most of the adult local community members are seen by “Encouraging Others” as seeking to maximise young people’s development and half to most are considered to be caring and supportive of young people.

- 3a. There were differences in the extent of networks to which “Encouraging Others” had access and that were useful or relevant when the student concerned was making career decisions and choices. Some had limited bonding networks with only family and friends in the local community, some had bridging networks with local people, others had wider bonding networks, or wider bridging networks with people outside the local community.
- 3b. The usefulness of the “Encouraging Others” networks also varied. In some instances the limited bonding networks still linked the student to a person/people who had specific information or knowledge that was useful to them or who had had experiences of interest to them.
- 4a. Many types of networks were identified as useful and relevant to the students and those who encouraged them – extended family, family friends, peers, school, college, local community, part time work, University, Department of Education, professional and media networks.
- 4b. A ‘dark side’ of networks was revealed – aspects that a) discouraged students from continuing with education/training; b) that influenced students’ perceptions of what was possible and therefore their aspirations; c) that restricted their experiences beyond the local area; d) that inadvertently and unintentionally worked against a student’s interest in continuing; and e) the cumulative effect of negative experiences within the education system.
- 4c. “Encouraging Others” lack of networks in terms of some aspects of post-compulsory education/training and outside college issues was noted by some participants.
5. Some “Encouraging Others” were interested only in the welfare of a particular student - a daughter, son, grandson, granddaughter, niece, nephew while others were interested in the welfare of young people generally. Interest in young people’s welfare ranged from awareness of the issues involved for rural students, to making suggestions for improvements to their situation, to practical contributions to the welfare of individual students or students generally.
6. “Encouraging Others” had varying levels of trust of the Tasmanian education system generally, of high schools and of senior secondary colleges. Higher levels of trust were associated with personal or another family member’s use of the education system. Lower levels of trust were associated with concerns about aspects of current student’s experiences, e.g. rural students’ accommodation, equity of provision of Years 11/12 and government policies and practice relating to senior secondary students.

APPENDIX U: LIST OF ISSUES TO DISCUSS IN FOCUS GROUPS

Focus group (student and EO) - List of issues to discuss.

1. Do financial factors (paying for the preferred choice of post-Year 12 option/availability of money) have any impact on rural students' decisions about their post-Year 10 plans? How does this affect/not affect?
2. Do the experiences of slightly older people have an impact on rural students' decisions about their post-Year 10 plans? How does this affect/not affect?
3. Are rural students' decisions to continue on to Year 11/12/13 studies at senior secondary college based on a) subjects/courses being interesting to them; b) knowing that they need the Year 12 qualification for better job prospects; c) another reason or reasons? If c) what is/are the other reason/reasons?
4. Are rural students' decisions about their post-Year 10 plans improved by gathering information from a wide range of sources? Why is this the case/not the case?
5. Are rural students' decisions about post-Year 10 plans improved by consulting widely with a range of different people? Why is this the case/not the case?
6. After completing Year 12, students appear to be choosing between getting a job and gaining financial independence or getting further education or training and staying dependent on their parent(s). Is this an accurate view of your own/other rural students' experiences?
7. Are rural students encouraged by anything/anyone not mentioned?

APPENDIX V: CODING FRAME AND EXAMPLES OF CODING

1. Difficulties/issues faced in participating in PCET

i) Personal issues faced

- Moving away from family, friends and the rural community
- Long and tiring daily travel
- Transport availability and timetabling
- Accommodation
- Living independently
- Combining study and part time employment

ii) Study issues faced

- Preparation for and adapting to senior secondary college study
- Study success (Year 11/12 results, tertiary entrance score)
- Study fatigue.

iii) Financial issues faced

- Cost of post-Year 10 and post-Year 12 education and training
- Cost of living away from home
- Cost of transport for post-Year 12 education and training.
- Need for/availability of part time employment.
- Sensitivity to/reluctance to accumulating HECS debt

iv) Competing aspirations and demands

- Conflicting family/community norms regarding the value of PCET
- Attraction of immediate employment on completion of Year 12
- Non-education and training aspirations and/or perceived obligations.

v) Uncertainty and/or change issues faced

- Unclear or changing PCET aspirations
- Change of personal or family circumstances (e.g. health, financial)
- Uncertainty about PCET (e.g. lack of information)
- Concerns about the availability of post-education and training employment

2. Encouragement/discouragement received to develop, PCET aspirations – aqua text

i) Providing information about

- financial assistance for PCET students,
- PCET opportunities,
- college subjects
- senior secondary study (requirements, adapting to)
- living in an urban area
- becoming independent
- careers/jobs

ii) Providing advice about PCET generally, about suitability of PCET course/career.

iii) Providing opinion about students' ability e.g. to continue with PCET.

iv) Preparation for transition or not (e.g. through early/prior discussion of aspects of transition, including issues to face, possible problems, strategies to use to overcome problems.

3. Encouragement/discouragement received to persist with/realise PCET aspirations/ Access to resources that encourage/discourage students to persist with/realise PCET aspirations – brown text

- i) Reinforcement or not of family/school/others' expectations,
- ii) Practical assistance to deal with issues, overcome problems
- iii) Psychological/emotional support to deal with issues, overcome problems,
- iv) Positive/negative feedback, reinforcement or not of students' aspirations, choices, decisions

4. Students' relationships to family and community networks – green text

- i) Strength of attachment to family, peers, community and rural location.
- ii) Close attachments to family, peers, others in the community.
- iii) Weak ties to teachers, others in the community.

5. Norms and values regarding PCET – orange text

- i) Strength of student commitment to PCET aspirations
 - Positive orientation to PCET,
 - PCET aspirations given priority
 - PCET aspiration certainty
 - Counter attraction of employment, financial independence
- ii) Strength of family expectations and values regarding PCET
- iii) Consonant or dissonant norms and values re PCET among people in students' networks
- iv) Sharing of norms regarding the value and desirability of PCET participation with family
- v) Sharing of norms regarding the value and desirability of PCET participation with peers.
- vi) Sharing of norms regarding the value and desirability of PCET participation with teachers and others at school/college.
- vii) Sharing of norms regarding the value and desirability of PCET participation with others in the community.

6. Trust – gold text

- i) Of family (personal)
- ii) Of peers (personal)
- iii) Of those at school/college (institutional)
- iv) Of others in the community (personal/social).

7. Social capital resources – red text

- i) Access to knowledge resources of use in developing PCET aspirations.
- ii) Access to identity resources of use in developing PCET aspirations.
- iii) Access to knowledge resources of use in persisting with and realising aspirations.
- iv) Access to identity resources of use in persisting with and realising aspirations.

Examples of coding

Notes:

1. The following segments of transcripts are examples of the use of the coding frame above. Each theme is represented by a separate colour text as indicated in the coding frame, followed by a brief descriptor.
2. More than one code applies to some segments of transcripts. In this case the segment is duplicated immediately after the first example, using the second colour and the segment is also underlined to emphasise this.

Researcher: Have you changed your plans since we last spoke? Yes you have, you planned to do Biomedical Science in Launceston, and you're doing...

Scott: *Geomatics - 1v) Change of course*

Researcher: Geomatics in Hobart, so

Scott: *Yeah, I'm not so sure about that . -1v) uncertainty*

Researcher: Can you tell me about how you came to change your plan?

Scott: *Um, actually, thinking now, I'm starting to, sort of wondering whether I should have stuck to what I was doing first.- 1v) uncertainty Biomedical is done up in Launceston and I didn't really want to go up to Launceston - 1i) moving away.*

Um, I don't know - 1v) uncertainty.

Researcher: So you didn't think of doing something that was closer to Biomedical Science in Hobart?

Scott: *Yeah I was thinking of doing Biotechnology down here actually. - 1v) unclear or changing aspirations Like, anyway I didn't want actually to go to Launceston, I was sort of, I was thinking to myself, you know, I'm only, what 17, 18 and I wasn't overly that mature, I'm still not now, in my eyes, I think - 1i) moving away*

Researcher: So it was the move away from home?

Scott: *Not really moving away from home; moving from home wouldn't really bother me, but sort of moving away from friends. Having a not close family I sort of, my friends are actually, sort of my family for me, in a sort of, you know, weird sense, 4i) strength of attachment to peers*

Researcher: So none of your friends were going to enrol in Launceston?

Scott: *No, well one was, but she sort of changed her mind and got a job instead, but.*

Researcher: Do you have a close attachment to home, family and your local community?

Jenny: *I'm close to Mum and the dog only. - 4i) strength of attachment to family I hated high school and St Helens. 4i) strength of attachment to community*

Researcher: Do you feel a need to move away from the local area? (Why is this?)

Jenny: *I moved at the beginning of Year 11 to the hostel, I wanted to get away. . 1i) moving away When I lived at home I had fights with my Dad and sister. Mum was ok to live with 1i) separating from family. Most of my friends came to Launceston with me. I was not popular in high school, got picked on, maybe because I didn't want to do things they were doing (getting drunk, getting pregnant, drugs etc. 1i) separating from peers. Launceston sounded better. I like being more independent, I get on better with Dad now I've moved out. , 1i) living independently. (Town near Vincent) is boring, there's nowhere to go. . 1i) moving away*

Researcher: To what extent do you rely on family for financial support?

Craig: *Not a lot at the moment, with the scholarships and that, I've got myself covered. So it means, I don't have to get it off Mum. 1iii) financial issues.*

Researcher: What about psychological/emotional support?

Craig: Oh, yeah, there's a lot of support there, just if I need anything. I talk to Mum just about every day still (first year uni.), on the 'phone. 3iii) psychological or emotional support

Researcher: Was there any "downside" to Year 11/12 for you?

Craig: I guess moving away from home. That would be the main one, 1i) moving away but no I loved it, I thought college was the best time ever. Like (inaudible) i)

1i) living independently and ii) adapting to senior secondary study

Researcher: So thinking of the move away from home, was that something that you... How did you deal with moving away from home?

Craig: Oh, I went home every weekend just about. So I was there like Monday night through to Thursday night, and then Friday, Saturday, Sunday night I'd go back to Branhholm. It was just something that had to be done. 1i) moving away, living independently And also my family often came in (to Frankland) 'cos they had music lessons. My brothers do music as well, so they'd come in during the week 3iii) psychological, emotional support, so it was... Four nights a week anyway, so.

Researcher: Remembering a bit further back, during high school years, maybe earlier, how important was school work/homework?

Joanna: It was really important to me. 5i) strength of commitment to PCET aspirations

Researcher: To you?

Joanna: Yes.

Researcher: What about the family, what about Mum and Dad?

Joanna: Not really 'cos Dad was always working and Mum was always tied up in her own things, so. 5ii) strength of family expectations/values re. PCET,

Joanna: It was really important to me. 5i) strength of commitment to PCET aspirations

Researcher: To you?

Joanna: Yes.

Researcher: What about the family, what about Mum and Dad?

Joanna: Not really 'cos Dad was always working and Mum was always tied up in her own things, so.

iii) consonance/dissonance of norms regarding PCET in students networks

Remembering back to the times when you were thinking about post-Year 10 plans, can you tell me whether or not your mother was available/useful when you wanted to/needed to talk about these plans?

Andrew: Yes, definitely, um, post Year 12 or Year 10?

Researcher: When you were thinking about what to do, so probably in Year 9 and 10.

Andrew: Yeah, Year 9, 10, Mum was always there. 5ii) strength of family expectations/values re. PCET We had a look at a number of different areas that'd suit our lifestyle, that I'd be able to spend a certain amount of time with her and the household but also, you know... Just getting the balance correct. 5ii) strength of family expectations/values re. PCET

Researcher: Remembering back to the times when you were thinking about post-Year 10 plans, aspirations etc. can you tell me whether or not your mother was available/useful when you had an issue/problem to deal with?

Andrew: Yeah if there ever was any issue or problem, yeah, Mum was always there. She'd, most of the time help me make a right decision. 3ii) practical assistance

Researcher: Remembering a bit further back, during high school years, maybe earlier, how important was school work/homework – to you and to your mother?

Andrew: *Oh, it's always been presented to me as a very important thing to do. 5ii) strength of family expectations/values re. PCET I've always thought of school as being the beginning of a career, 5i) strength of commitment to PCET aspirations but, um, I should have brought in a little book, there's a little book that I studied with my mother, and put out by the Watch Tower and Bible Tract Society and that encouraged all the young ones to do well at school because it's a training ground for work. 5ii) strength of family expectations and values re. PCET, iv) sharing of norms re PCET with family, vii) sharing of norms re. PCET with others in the community I always put that as an emphasis 5i) strength of commitment to PCET aspirations.*

Researcher: So for you and your mother it was important?

Andrew: *Yep.*

Researcher: You have some older siblings, did you have any talk with them, or discussions with them?

Andrew: *Yes I did. Most of them ... Oh one of them had ... Sorry, I still had one of my older siblings at home up until the beginning of last year, so for the high school he was there to talk to, and I meet up with my brothers on the weekend or during the week days. I'd probably pop the question then if I needed to ask them one, (They were) always there to help 7i) Access to knowledge resources useful for developing PCET aspirations, 7ii) Access to identity resources useful for developing PCET aspirations.*

Researcher: Could I confirm from last year that your family was important in encouraging?

David: *Yep, very strongly.*

Researcher: Did they expect you to continue?

David: *Yes. 5ii) strength of family expectation/values re PCET.*

Researcher: They actually said that, did they?

Researcher: *Yeah, I suppose they would've, 5ii) strength of family expectation/values re PCET but I guess I've just always, it's always been thought that you always continue to college in our family. Just... 5iv) sharing norms re PCET with family*

Researcher: Were you aware of your parents having particular expectations of you

David: *I think they've always been proud of when I do well 3iv) positive feedback and I guess they like expect me to do well 5ii) strength of family expectation/values re PCET, but there's not really like pressure or anything. You know, if my marks drop or something then they might talk to me about it, 2v) preparation for transition 'cos I suppose they expect me to continue with my path 5ii) strength of family expectation/values re PCET.*

Researcher: Remembering back to the times when you were thinking about post-Year 10 plans, aspirations etc. can you tell me whether or not your parents were available/useful when you wanted to/needed to talk about these plans?

Taylor: *After Year 10?*

Researcher: Mmm, when you were in Year 10 and were thinking, "what am I going to do next year"?

Taylor: *Were my parents available to talk to?*

Researcher: Yes, and were they useful to talk to?

Taylor: They were available to talk to. 5ii) strength of family expectations/values re PCET I didn't find them overly useful because they didn't really know enough about the directions I wanted to go into, like they didn't really know enough about uni. or like I don't know, like what it's like with nursing and stuff like that, like the careers I was interested in, they didn't have knowledge about them. So it wasn't that useful. 7i) Access to knowledge resources useful for PCET Like they were there to talk to and stuff but they didn't really... Know what I mean? 5ii) strength of family expectations/values re PCET Like they were there to talk to and stuff but they didn't really... Know what I mean? 6ii) trust of family

Researcher: Do you think families are important in encouraging rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 12? (Ask for explanation)

Craig: Yep, definitely.

Researcher: How's that?

Craig: Oh well I know that... One of my friends that I had in high school and in first year, Grade 11, he was living with foster parents, and they were really, sort of, just do what you like kind of thing, and he quit school and um, so then, you know, I mean with my parents, oh we want you to do this, kind of thing. They were always saying, this is a good idea, and I've come here to uni. so I guess there's something 2iv) preparation for transition. my parents, oh we want you to do this, kind of thing. They were always saying, this is a good idea, and I've come here to uni. so I guess there's something 5ii) strength of family expectations re PCET

1(v)Change, uncertainty and (iv)competing aspirations/demands

Researcher: You're not actually enrolled in anything this year, but you did start off, so can you tell me what you started off by enrolling in?

Helena: I just chopped and changed so much. I was in Science and then I went and changed it to Arts 1v) change, 'cos I don't have my licence and I thought Science is really like pracs. so I just wouldn't be able to get back home. 1i) transport availability

Researcher: So you actually applied for Science as your first choice, and you'd actually started going to classes?

Helena: Um, no I had a lot of... I was in Science then I went to this, um, enrolment day where you can change your preference, and so I changed it to Arts. 1v) change Oh, so you didn't actually start doing a Science degree?

Yes, but, so I started in Arts and then I just thought to myself, what am I doing, like, I don't have a clue what I want to do really 1v) uncertainty and, um, I just thought to myself, no bugger it. And also at my work, my boss went away which meant I could get lots of work. She went away for six weeks around the world, so that kind of influenced my decision, 'cos like the pay I got, I can do all this work 1iv) attraction of immediate employment and figure out what I really want to do. 'Cos my major worry was I'd do a year in Arts and then I'd change. Which means I'd do a year and then have this HECS bill and totally change my course 1iii) reluctance to accumulating HECS debt. I thought to myself, that's probably what I'm going to do, I'll just defer now so I got off before the Census date, so, whatever it's called, deferred without penalty or something, so I just deferred, and so I have a place in Science apparently next year. It's changed around so much. If I want to go, and um, yeah, so that's pretty much what happened. 1v unclear or changing aspirations) I just was really worried, 'cos I'd heard from a lot of people how they changed after a year, 3ii) encouragement/discouragement to persist with aspirations and I thought to myself I don't want to change after a year and, where I could have a little

bit of money saved and yeah, get more out of it. **5i) counter attraction of employment/financial independence.**

Researcher: Who influenced your choice of what to do after Year 10?/How did they influence you?

Lisa: My involvement in Scouts, teaching younger ones led to the idea. **2i) providing information.** My aunts who were ex-teachers, and cousins including one studying education. I talked to them, extensively. Parents of some of my friends - talked to me extensively. **7i) and ii) Access to knowledge and identity resources useful for PCET aspirations.** My class, school mates were supportive, said I'd be good at it **2ii) providing advice about suitability of aspiration.** My class, school mates were supportive, said I'd be good at it **7ii) Access to identity resources.** High school teachers were supportive, they found information for me. **2i) providing information** High school teachers were supportive, they found information for me. **7i) Access to knowledge resources information** At college my drama teacher talked to me extensively **2i) providing information,** and my college Biology teacher said I had the right attitude for teaching **2ii) providing opinion re suitability of aspirations;** **2iii) providing opinion about student's ability to continue.**

Researcher: Were the opinions of anyone else important?

Lisa People who confirmed I'd be a good teacher (friends' parents, drama teacher, high school teachers) - that gave me confidence **3iv) reinforcement of student's aspirations.** People who confirmed I'd be a good teacher (friends' parents, drama teacher, high school teachers) - that gave me confidence – 6iv) trust of those in the community; 6iii) trust of others in the community.

Researcher: Have you been influenced by what any other person/people have done or are doing?

Lisa: My drama teacher this year is a really good teacher. I'd like to do what friends' parents (teachers) are doing. **2i) providing information;** My drama teacher this year is a really good teacher. I'd like to do what friends' parents (teachers) are doing. **7ii) Access to identity resources useful in developing aspirations.**

Researcher: I got the impression from last interview that the school here is very encouraging of students to continue past Year 10, is this correct?

Elizabeth: The high school?

Researcher: Yes.

Elizabeth: Yes. **7ii) Access to identity resources useful in developing aspirations**

Researcher: Is it all students?

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Researcher: Can you tell me a little bit of detail about your own particular experience of getting career advice/information?

Elizabeth: I never really ..., I only really got it at college **2i) providing PCET information.**

Researcher: At high school you got advice about ...

Elizabeth: Which courses to do at college and that. **2i) providing PCET information.**

Researcher: So at college, I seem to think that you chose in Year 11, or got interested in your hospitality and tourism well into college?

Elizabeth: Yeah. In Year 12 I did Tourism Studies and in Year 13 I did the VET course in Tourism.

Researcher: And you really enjoyed that didn't you, I remember?

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Researcher: So then you were starting to think more specifically about a career?

Elizabeth: Yes

Researcher: And you got some advice from ...

Elizabeth: Yeah, from my VET teacher mainly 2i) providing PCET information.

Researcher: You didn't see the careers people in Student Services?

Elizabeth: Um, a couple of times, not much 2i) providing PCET information..

Researcher: What did you think about the college information that was provided?

Elizabeth: Yeah I thought it was alright except, like, they didn't explain much about, like, I didn't have an older brother or sister and so I didn't know about pre-tertiary subjects. I didn't know what they were, and it wasn't until Year 12 that I actually understood what they were. 7i) Access to knowledge resources re PCET So, yeah, I would have liked to, have probably done one, a couple of them in Year 11, just to say, 'cos I didn't know what (subject) I wanted to do, so I would have liked them to have done that a bit better. 6iii) Trust of school/college.

Researcher: I seem to remember in your interview last time that you'd said the orientation day was badly planned or badly organised. Can you tell me a little bit...?

Elizabeth: That was because it snowed, and we had to leave at 12 o'clock to come back home again. So we only spent a couple of hours at the college 2i) providing information re PCET.

Researcher: Oh, so it wasn't as much that they planned it badly,

Elizabeth: No, it was because it snowed.

Researcher: Badly organised that they didn't put the snow off?

Elizabeth: (Nods and laughs).

Researcher: So it was just that it wasn't as complete and they didn't offer you another opportunity ?

Elizabeth: No.

Researcher: Oh, that was a shame. Was there any confusion about choosing from the large range of subjects offered?

Elizabeth: No I wasn't confused, just the pre-tertiary's confused me a bit, didn't know what they were. 1iv) uncertainty re PCET.

Researcher: So in Year 11 you knew what you wanted to do?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Researcher: Any difficulty choosing an appropriate combination of subjects?

Elizabeth: Not with me there wasn't.

Researcher: Was there any element of getting any advice from the college or guidance or advice, when you were deciding what to do after college?

Elizabeth: I think it was pretty good 6iii) Trust of college.

Do you think you were getting - and I'm not sure when in Year 13 or in the holidays or whenever, when you changed your plan - but towards the end of Year 13 when you were thinking of going to TAFE, were you getting enough information and guidance about about all aspects of TAFE life? (including Student Services, subjects offered, timetable, resid. colleges/accommodation, financial assistance available, living/getting about in the city (e.g location of useful places such as Centrelink, building your support network, becoming independent etc.)

Elizabeth: Yeah, especially from the VET teacher 7i) Access to knowledge resources useful in developing aspirations; 7iii) Access to knowledge resources useful in persisting with aspirations.

Researcher: Do you think families are important in encouraging rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 12?

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Researcher: Why is that?

Elizabeth: *Oh, because they're your family, and because you listen to what they say, I think, you know ...* 6i) Trust of family

Researcher: Not everybody says they listen to their family, why do you listen to your family?

Elizabeth: *(Laughs) Because they're my family. I just do* 6i) Trust of family.

Researcher: Do you think **people in your home community** are important in encouraging rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 12? .

Elizabeth: *Not really,* 6iv) Trust of others in the community.

Researcher: Why is that?

Elizabeth: *Because they're just, they're not your family. You just don't really listen to what they have to say* 6iv) Trust of others in the community.

Researcher: Is there more that families can do to encourage rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 12? And not just your particular family, is there anything that other families could do?

Elizabeth: *Not really, I don't think so.*

Researcher: Is there more that **people in** local communities can do to encourage rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 12? Please explain your answer.

Elizabeth: *No, no I don't think so.*

Researcher: What about the school? Does the school have much to say about after college ?

Elizabeth: *They just mainly talk about getting students to college, Year 11 and 12* 2 i) providing information about PCET and then don't really worry about the rest 6iii) Trust of school

Researcher: Leave it to the college after that?

Elizabeth: *Mmm.*

Researcher: Is there more that colleges can do to encourage rural students to continue with their education/training beyond Year 12?

Elizabeth: *I think they do a pretty good job now* 6iii) Trust of college.

Researcher: Can you explain how it's a pretty good job?

Elizabeth: *Well they've got heaps of information of what's available out there, you know, heaps of people that help, that can tell you what is out there.* 6iii) Trust of college

Researcher: And the students use that information and use the people?

Elizabeth: *Yeah, yeah.* 6iii) Trust of college

Researcher: How important is Elizabeth's family in encouraging her to continue with her education/training beyond Year 10?

Elizabeth's mother: *We all tried to encourage her without being too pushy. We had to set the example, tell her of our experiences, of how difficult it would be for me to get work now. 2i) providing information re PCET; ii) providing advice about PCET; We all tried to encourage her without being too pushy. We had to set the example, tell her of our experiences, of how difficult it would be for me to get work now. 5ii) strength of family expectations/values re PCET; ii) providing advice about PCET; Her family is the most important, she often asked for advice, often talked to me. 7ii) Access to identity resources useful in developing aspirations.*

Researcher: How important are families generally in encouraging rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10?

Elizabeth's mother: *I think so, especially for rural students. They would ask their parents first for advice and encouragement.* 6i) Trust of family

Researcher: Is there more that families can do to encourage rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10?

Elizabeth's mother: *Probably not, you don't want to be too pushy, just encourage them to do what they want to do. Especially at that age. 3iv) reinforcement of student's aspirations.*

Researcher: How important are friends in encouraging Elizabeth to continue with her education/training beyond Year 10?

Elizabeth's mother: *Her friends are at the same college, they all encourage each other, by just talking generally and about particular subjects they are doing 3iv) . positive feedback from peers. Her friends are at the same college, they all encourage each other, by just talking generally and about particular subjects they are doing. 7iii) Access to identity resources useful in realising aspirations.*

Researcher: How important are friends generally in encouraging rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10?

Elizabeth's mother: *Very, friends take over from families after they go to college, and especially after they are 18. 2i) providing information re PCET, ii) providing advice about PCET, iii) providing opinion about PCET Friends will listen to them. 3iii) psychological, emotional support.*

Researcher: Is there more that friends can do to encourage rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10?

Elizabeth's mother: *Just be there and be a good friend.*

Researcher: Who influenced your choice of what to do after Year 10?

Richard: *My mother, aunt, the Principal, the school careers adviser and the college careers adviser*

Researcher: How did they influence you?

Richard: *My mother by discussing it all 7i) and ii) Access to knowledge and identity resources re. PCET, and supporting my decisions 3iv) reinforcement of student's aspirations/choices. My aunt, I talked to her about being at Uni (she's doing accounting) 2i) providing information. The Principal was good in pursuit of a Forestry Commission apprenticeship, she got information for me 2i) providing information, brought people to speak to us at school 7i) Access to knowledge resources. The School careers adviser provided information about the Forestry Commission and college 2i) providing information, provided contacts 7i) Access to knowledge resources. The College careers adviser provided information 2i) providing information, provided contacts 7i) Access to knowledge resources, helped with options, especially TAFE. 2i) providing information.*

Researcher: To what extent have you been influenced by what your parents or siblings have done, or are doing?

Richard: *My parents haven't got formal qualifications so I was more determined to get these through Uni/TAFE for job reasons 7ii) Access to identity resources. Also there are people in the community who were working in the forestry industry. I thought I'd be interested in that sort of job. 7i) Access to knowledge resources; ii) Access to identity resources*

Researcher: Were the opinions of anyone else important?

Richard: *To some extent. If I really wanted to do something it wouldn't make any difference but it would depend on what they were saying. If parents/school told me an employer would be going out of business that would make me look at other options. 6i) Trust of family; iii) Trust of school*

Researcher: Have you been influenced by what any other person/people have done or are doing?

Richard: *I've seen how people can succeed if they get good qualifications, e.g. people in the forestry industry, and what people are doing now when they didn't*

finish school 7i) and ii) Access to knowledge and identity resources useful in developing aspirations. Generally, no one in particular.

Researcher: Do you think families are important in encouraging rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10?

Lisa: *Yes, if family don't support you your motivation to go on falls away 3iv) reinforcement of students' aspirations/choices. You need it (their encouragement). 5iv) Sharing of norms and values re PCET Yes, if family don't support you your motivation to go on falls away. You need it (their encouragement). 6i) Trust of family*

Researcher: Do you think people in the local community are important in encouraging rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10? Please explain your answer.

Lisa: *Yes, you need the opinion of someone, not a relative, to encourage you, advise you. You trust their opinion more 6iv) Trust of others in the community*

Researcher: Is there more that families can do to encourage rural students to continue with education/training beyond Year 10? Please explain your answer.

Lisa: *Just find out more about what courses their students are carrying on with/interested in 2i) providing information*

Researcher: Remembering back to the times when you were thinking about post-Year 10 plans, aspirations etc. can you tell me whether or not your parents were available/useful when you wanted to/needed to talk about these plans?

Helena: *Um, yep, yeah from memory they were, yeah.*

Researcher: How often did you and your parents talk about education issues/plans?

Helena: *Um, in Year 10, we talked a bit about what kind of... I got a bit of help choosing what kind of subjects 2ii) providing advice, 'cos in Year 10 I was still a bit unsure of my ability. I didn't think I could tackle pre-tertiary, iv) uncertainty so they um, they're good friends with a guy at Hobart College who's a Student Adviser. So we went to his house and had a good talk to him 7i) and ii) Access to knowledge and identity resources, and he said, no do them Helena, you've got, you'll be fine. 2ii) and iii) providing advice, opinion. So they kind of wanted to help me and yeah 5ii) strength of family expectations and values re PCET.*

Researcher: So would you have talked every week or ...?

Helena: *Yeah, heaps, I was always obsessed, I'm very career-obsessed and I'd always say, Dad, (Maths teacher at the school she attended) do you reckon I could handle Stage 2 Maths, or do you reckon I'd be good at English and I'd just get advice from them, or do you reckon I should do a Science, so yeah 2ii) and iii) providing advice, opinion.*

Researcher: So pretty regularly?

Helena: *Oh, yeah.*

Researcher: Now you already said they (parents) were involved in discussions about subject choice. Were they involved in discussion with you about which college to attend?

Helena: *They didn't want me to go to Argyle College, um, they were kind of, not really involved but they did, would have preferred me to go to (name of private school) or Campbell College 2ii) providing advice. It was my choice, um, but they thought I would have been better off at (name of private school) or Campbell College, and when I changed to Argyle (College) they thought, er, I didn't really make a good decision 2iii) providing opinion. They kind of, in a way, it sounds bad, they wanted me to get away from my friendship group in Pieman 4i) strength of attachment to peers and make new, more academic friends 2v) preparation for*

transition . 'Cause they knew that all my friends were nice, they're not going to be a really academic group **2v) preparation for transition** so they were trying to, not force me to but like advise me **2ii) providing advice**, but in the end it was my decision . But they still say now, oh, you know, Argyle (College), they were really happy with Argyle, but oh, they said you could have, if you went to Campbell College you could have made new friends **2iii) providing opinion**, which is true, I could have, but ... **4i) strength of attachment to peers**

Researcher: Remembering back to the times when you were thinking about post-Year 10 plans, aspirations etc. can you tell me whether or not your parents were available/useful when you had an issue/problem to deal with? You may have already answered that with the issue of whether to go with your friends or whether to go Were there any other issues or problems?

Helena: Oh, whenever I had problems with my friends or school, or whatever, I'd always go talk to them, yeah. **3ii) practical assistance; iii) psychological emotional support**

Researcher: So that was a regular thing too?

Helena: Mmm.

Researcher: Remembering a bit further back, during high school years, maybe earlier, how important was school work/homework to you and to your parents?

Helena: Um, fairly important. I was very, very involved in sport through high school, so um, I had to balance that a lot, but um, no, I'd always make time for homework when I needed it. I wasn't a kid who'd sit down and study heaps, I'd pretty much, my attitude was do enough, but, yeah. But it was, I'd always do my homework. **5i) strength of commitment to PCET aspirations**

Researcher: Always had it done?

Helena: Oh, yeah.

Researcher: And your parents were they always keen on having it done as well?

Helena: Yeah, yeah, they were always there to help me. **5ii) strength of family expectations and values re. PCET; 5iv) sharing norms and values re PCET with family**

Researcher: Were you aware of your parents having particular expectations of you?

Helena: Um, well they always knew I'd do well. Um, they didn't really have expectations to do, be like a top scholar and get awards but they always expected me to do pretty well **5ii) strength of family expectations**

Researcher: And expected you to go on to college, do you think?

Helena: Oh, yes definitely college. Um, uni. they said was up to me, really. They thought I would **5ii) strength of family expectations** but ultimately Dad always said whatever you do Helena you'll do well in. **3iv) positive feedback, reinforcement of student's aspirations.**

Researcher It seems pretty obvious that your family is encouraging to you?

Helena: (Nodded in agreement)

Researcher: And you said right at the very beginning about your friends not necessarily being academic, so they weren't necessarily planning to go to college or to go to uni?

Helena: Um, all of them were going to college, but I knew that they probably, it's hard to explain but like they, a few of them were talking about uni. but then things happened and a couple of them didn't end up going. **1v) change** And that probably would have influenced me. **4i) strength of attachment to peers**

Researcher: So how would it have influenced you?

Helena: Um, if I had've had Amy and Georgina say, at uni. it would have probably pushed me to go more, even if I wasn't happy. **4i) strength of attachment to peers** I just found it hard, going, I just felt like even though I could've made new friends I just felt very isolated, kind of. And I thought to myself, they've all got jobs, I'd be at uni. When they want to go out I'd have to be studying and I just felt, no way. That kind of big pull, more than I thought it would be **1i) separating from peers**. If I, say went up to Launceston or something, maybe I'd find it differently because I'd be in a more academic environment, but it was, it is, part of it, for me anyway, coming from Pieman, kind of at home and commuting and stuff. One of my friends Anna lives in town now, she just couldn't hack the commuting. She just could not handle ... She wanted to do really well, **1i) long and tiring daily travel** she wants to get into Law and to do well she says she has to move, she can't study back home, and yeah.

Researcher: What will you be doing in 2005? At this stage you're just planning to work for this year?

Helena: Um., I'm basically, reason I took the year off is I'm, was just very, kind of confused about the way I was heading. I just wanted more clarity. Um, big decision was if I take a year off I might be a bit clearer **1v) unclear aspirations** and if I could get to a career without going to uni. I would. I'm probably looking at going into Sales, all those kind of things. I've made it to the last stage of a job interview at (name), an office admin. assistant. **5v) counter attraction of employment** I got picked out of like all these girls, they liked me best so I'll probably hear about that tomorrow. So if I got say a job like that and there were opportunities to be, 'cos it's a company where they push you up the ladder, I'd go that way **5v) counter attraction of employment**. Depending, I'm still up in the air, but um, basically Mum and Dad... Dad even has changed his views. If you talk to Dad again, he's, it's amazing he seems to think, that, um, uni., well is good if you, it's good in some ways but he reckons that, um, he looks at lots of kids, people are earning more than him, like the tradesmen, and he's a teacher and, yeah, and so it's amazing, **1iv) competing aspirations** Mum and Dad have changed their views. And they're even saying you don't need to go if I get a job. **1v) change** And so basically the plan is if I get a job which has got really good career aspects, I won't go, but if I only get casual work I will go **1iv) competing aspirations**

Researcher: So the Health Science degree, you've lost interest?

Helena: Um, I am so interested in it, but to get a job at the end, I'm thinking I might have a bit of trouble, **1v) concerns about post-PCET employment** 'cos I've been talking to kids and they say, it's great, it's really interesting, but then a few kids come out saying what do I do now? What do I do with it? **3iv) feedback re student's aspirations** I mean I reckon with any uni. degree you can get a job but I don't want to do three years of study up there then come out of it and kind of not get a job. **1v) concerns about post-PCET employment** I'd go for the marketing side if I did it, 'cos I know it had streams, and I'd go for the business administration side of it, **1iv) competing aspirations** but, I'm just very, um, I want to find out a bit more information about it, like if I'm guaranteed to get good jobs out of it. **1v(uncertainty about PCET/lack of information** The jobs I want are not in the Health Care industry, more in the marketing, sales or administration, those kind of jobs I've decided. **1iv) competing aspirations** Yeah, I really have changed. At first I thought I was going to be something like a Physio. but then no, I don't really want to be anymore. I just want to get into the business world. **1v) change**

Researcher: So what will you be doing next year do you think?

Helena: Er, not sure, all depends whether I get a job,

Researcher: And what sort of job it is?

Helena: And what sort of job it is. It's, I'm getting there, in terms of where I want to be but, oh, man, I mean it all depends on the job, it really does. I'd like to, it's hard to say. I will know actually pretty much what I'm doing, I'll either be at uni., don't know if er, don't know about TAFE, uni. or work. I'll only work if I have a full time job, I'm not doing casual work, it'll be a waste of time. **1v) unclear or changing aspirations/uncertainty**

Researcher: So are you still confident that your plan will work out, that you'll succeed with it?

Helena: I'll succeed at anything I do, anything. I'm very, I know I can do well at anything I do.

Researcher: Ok.

Helena: I've got the backups, if that's, if that doesn't work I'll, you know, I've always got plenty of support around me. **3iii) psychological and emotional support.** I've got the backups, if that's, if that doesn't work I'll, you know, I've always got plenty of support around me **7iii) and iv) Access to knowledge and identity resources to persist**

Researcher: Have you been further encouraged/influenced by anyone else in your choice of what to do after Year 12?

Helena: Well, ok, a few ways. Well Mum and Dad, it was really funny, after college, after Year 12 they kind of said to me, well if you wanted to, 'cos I was basically, I had a casual job, I think I mentioned that, casual meant that I was working all the summer holidays and they basically said, well how about you ask for work instead of going to uni. and just work for a year. Be really good for you. **2ii) provided advice** Um, 'cos, and, um, of course work was always after me, what was I doing, 'cos they needed someone else. But of course I wanted to keep my options open and I didn't say, well I didn't want to go to uni. So they employed someone else but I still worked there a bit, and, um yeah, so that kind of, parents (inaudible) probably influenced me, and um, probably friends, kind of, oh what are you going to uni. for Helena? Like why are you even going? 'Cause when they asked me what I'm doing, they're like, where will that get you? **2iii) provided opinion** 'Cause they didn't realise. And I'm like, not sure but I just do it, see how I go. Yeah so that kind of influenced me a bit, oh don't go to uni. Helena, take a year off or something **2ii) provided advice.** And when Amy, my friend, took a year ... decided not to go, that kind of really influenced me, 'cos she's like probably my best friend. That was a big thing. If she had've gone I would have, would've been there. **4i) strength of attachment to peers**

... friends did, and then I just wasn't happy in myself. I just like, I just wanted to be happy. In uni. I was just miserable, almost, kind of, um **3iii) psychological, emotional support.**

Researcher: Ok.